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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013

Lebanon*,**

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** The annex to the present report is on file with the Secretariat and is available for consultation. It may also be accessed from the web page of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

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Fourth and fifth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lebanon 2005-2014

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Introduction

1. Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child by virtue of act No. 20 of 20/10/1990, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography by virtue of act No. 414 of 5/6/2002.

2. Pursuant to Article 44, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the State undertakes to submit periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention once every five years. Lebanon has already submitted three reports, the first in 1994, the second in 1998 and the third in 2003. It shall submit the first report on the implementation of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography by the end of 2016.

3. The Committee on the Rights of the Child considered Lebanon's third periodic report on 24/5/2006, and issued its concluding observations on 2/6/2006 (CRC/C/LBN/CO/3).

4. The present report was prepared according to the general guiding principles concerning the format and content of the periodic reports that are to be submitted by States parties pursuant to Article 44, paragraph 1(b) of the Convention and adopted by the Committee at its fifty fifth session (CRC/C/58/Rev.2). The present report covers the period from 2005 to the end of 2014, according to the general guiding principles, with reference to some of the information already mentioned in the previous periodic report and which has not changed.

5. The present report has been prepared by the Higher Council for Childhood in the Ministry of Social Affairs in close cooperation with all relevant ministries, namely: Social Affairs, Justice, Interior and Municipalities, Public Health, Education and Higher Education, Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Finance, National Defence, Public Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, Tourism, Public Works and Transport, the General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces, the General Directorate of Public Security, the Educational Centre for Research and Development, the Central Statistics Department, the Higher Relief Commission, the National Foundation for Employment, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the Council of the South, the Council for Development and Reconstruction, with technical support from UNICEF in Lebanon and with the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are members of the coordinating committees of the Higher Council for Childhood.

Legal, social, economic and political context in which children's rights are exercised in Lebanon (implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

6. Lebanon has suffered, over the past years, from the lack of political stability, which greatly impeded the developmental process. The last 10 years have witnessed several security incidents, including the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in July 2006 and the periodic and temporary paralysis of basic government institutions and facilities, as well as

fighting and internal conflicts, especially the 2007 battle of Nahr el-Bared and its consequences. Furthermore, the crisis that erupted in Syria in 2011 resulted in the massive displacement of approximately 1.5 million Syrians which increased the burden and pressure on an already fragile infrastructure in the State.

7. This accumulation of political and economic crises and conflicts no doubt hampered efforts aimed at the application of some human rights principles and the fulfilment of international commitments. This, however, has not prevented progress in the area of good governance and human development, sustained economic growth was observed in the context of improved stability in recent years, including the holding of parliamentary elections on time during 2009. But this was not the case in subsequent parliamentary elections as Parliament extended its own mandate on two successive occasions, despite significant objections from rights activists. The political crisis worsened as a result of the presidential vacuum and the lack of consensus on electing a President since May 2014, and the resulting disruption of the legislative process.

8. There are many factors that hinder the exercise of children's rights in Lebanon, holds back the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties and limits the application of domestic regulations and strategies; for example, the weak coordination at the national and local levels in child rights issues, the lack of allocation and approval of budgets and the emergence of sudden and urgent priorities. Lebanon still needs more political will, awareness, knowledge and human and financial resources to build effective and practical systems for implementing human rights and the rights of the child.

The main factors that impede the immediate implementation of children's rights in Lebanon are:

Economic

9. A large number of Lebanese children live in poverty (about 28 per cent), the persistent political problems prevent the improvement of the economic situation, and therefore the economic reforms do not advance at an acceptable pace. A large number of families remain unable to ensure sound upbringing and quality education for their children as a result of the high costs of quality education and the lack of appropriate work opportunities.

Political

10. The current political situation and the State system in place sometimes impede the opportunity to provide an environment that promotes and protects human rights as a whole, and prevent the inclusion of basic social needs of citizens as national priorities to develop structural systems and the provision of a minimum of services that will improve the lives and well-being of children. Indeed, child rights issues and respect for those rights are often non-existent in the general political discourse, which results in their being poorly implemented in practice. There is, however, a growing awareness in the Lebanese public circles and in Government institutions of the need to pursue efforts in this area.

Social

11. The social factors in Lebanon remain one of the main obstacles to exercising the rights of the child. The Lebanese society is facing continuing challenges. There is no political and social consensus on a clear and common vision of policies and strategies that could support the individual and the family in particular to address social problems. The greatest challenge that currently faces Lebanon consists of the social repercussions of the Syrian exodus crisis, and its humanitarian, economic and security consequences. This situation could deteriorate further due to the absence of quick solutions for the conflict, the low volume of humanitarian response services, the lack of commitment by the international community and the non-fulfilment of their pledges, thereby affecting the Lebanese host communities and reflecting the political discordance surrounding this conflict on the Lebanese and Syrian social fabric.

12. The Lebanese family is an environment that fosters children, but the economic, political and social factors mentioned above have a negative impact on its security, cohesion and vitality, and, as a result of poor programmes intended to support fathers and mothers, this may lead to child neglect and abuse.

13. The attitude of the media towards children is inconsistent. Often, some are driven by emotions in their coverage of certain issues in order to raise public opinion interest. However, some improvement has been noted in terms of greater respect for the child's right to privacy.

1. Protection and promotion of human rights — general framework

14. The situation of human rights and good governance in Lebanon has modestly improved in recent years, but their remains an urgent need for much progress. Most laws in Lebanon seek to protect human rights, but their implementation is marred by some shortcomings. The main challenge remains the promotion of equal participation and equal opportunities in the exercise of civil, cultural, economic, political and social, as well as gender equality, and the right to a healthy environment.

15. Despite the fact that Lebanon is a party to several main international instruments on human rights, gaps persist between legal obligations and procedures and practices on the ground. It has made efforts to improve the human rights situation; in 2012, the National Human Rights Plan (NPAHR) was launched and, in 2008, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT) was ratified. There is broad consensus on opposing torture in all its forms, and the Government of Lebanon is striving to abolish the death penalty from the Penal Code. Lebanon is also fulfilling its obligations to submit State reports on the situation of human rights (UPR) and CEDAW and other periodic reports as required by its accession to a number of international conventions on human rights.

2. Non-discrimination and equality

16. The constitution guarantees equality; however, Lebanon needs to further reform its laws and practices to ensure protection from discrimination and provide equality for all. On 8 April 2014, the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Administration and Justice in the House of Representatives

adopted the proposed Act establishing the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (NHRI) in line with the Paris Principles. However, the delay in its approval is due to the legislative stalemate in Parliament at present.

3. Access to redress and justice

17. The Lebanese system has numerous judicial accountability mechanisms and administrative oversight. The judiciary enjoy an independent authority, but owing to operational mechanisms and procedures as well as limited financial and human resources, the effectiveness of these institutions remains restricted. Other aspects also require improvements such as the speedy resolution of outstanding cases and adoption of appropriate legislation.

4. Child rights commitments

18. Although Lebanon was late in the submission of the fourth and fifth reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child within the specified time frame, this does not lessen its moral and legal commitment to the Convention. The submission of the present report is an affirmation of the conviction of Lebanon to fulfil its commitments. This report will be an opportunity to operationalize the mechanism for the preparation of the first report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which has already been initiated by the Higher Council for Childhood, but circumstances prevented its follow-up.

19. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the third national report, the Higher Council for Childhood proceeded to print the report and a summary thereof in Arabic and English and disseminate it on a large scale; it has been distributed to all ministries, NGOs and international organizations. To that end, it organized regional meetings in all governorates where a summary of the situation of children in Lebanon was presented, as well as the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the third report, with a view to assisting associations and institutions working with children to rectify their work and design plans and projects based on national priorities. The Higher Council for Childhood also organized a meeting in 2011 with members of the Parliament's Woman and Child Committee in which it presented the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the third national report.

The Higher Council for Childhood also prepared and disseminated a book containing the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the previous three periodic reports, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Protocols and the guidelines for the preparation of reports on the Convention and Protocols.

Chapter I

General Implementation Measures

I. Legislation

20. The protection of children's rights in Lebanon is achieved through a number of sectoral laws owing to the lack of a comprehensive common law concerning the child. Decrees, circulars and other decisions also have a role in filling gaps in legislation, which help to overcome implementation difficulties pending the adoption of appropriate legislation. As a result of the political stalemate in many respects, the adoption of new amendments to existing legislation is slow, which often precludes the harmonization of domestic laws with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments.

21. The following are some legislative achievements issued during the period 2005-2014 in chronological order:

2006:

- Decree No. 16417/2006 on determining the cases of exemption for persons with learning difficulties from the official intermediate school certificate examinations.

2008:

- Act No. 12 of 5 September 2008 on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Act No. 47 of 11 December 2008, which provides for the regulation of the marketing of infant and newborn feeding products, means and tools.

2010:

- Circular No. 7/M/2010 of 3 February 2010 of the Minister of Education and Higher Education, on allowing the registration of Palestinian pupils and students in public and private schools and in universities upon presentation of an identity card.

2011:

- Act No. 150 of 17 August 2011 which made education mandatory and free for basic education (15 years) in public schools;
- Act No. 174 of 17 August 2011 on "prohibiting smoking in closed public places";
- Act No. 162 of 17 August 2011, providing for the annulment of article 562 of the Penal Code concerning honour crimes;
- Act No.164 1 September 2011 relating to the punishment of the crime of trafficking in persons in Lebanon;

- Decree No. 7194 0f 16 December 2011 of the Ministry of Public Works, specifying construction standards to be adhered to for all private and public buildings.

2012:

- Decree No. 8987 of 29 December 2012, which prohibited the employment of youth under the age of 18.

2014:

- Act No. 293 of 1 April 2014 "Act protecting women and other family members from domestic violence";
- Act No. 266 of 1 April 2014, which increased the maternity leave to ten weeks;
- Act No. 286 of 30 April 2014, which annulled Item 1 of Article 186 of the Penal Code on disciplining children;
- Decree No. 11930, which set the kindergarten period for children to three school years instead of two, and the age of admission of the child in public schools to three years instead of four.

22. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Higher Council for Childhood signed on 19 November 2007 a cooperation agreement with Saint Joseph University, with support from UNICEF and Save the Children, to conduct a comparative legal study of Lebanese legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A working group of legal experts was established, which implemented in the first phase a survey of Lebanese legislation and carried in the second phase a comparison with the Convention on the Rights of the Child to identify gaps in existing texts. In the final stage, draft laws were submitted concerning the following:

1. Amending some articles of the Penal Code and adding new provisions concerning raising the age of the juvenile victims to 18 completed years, imposing stiffer penalties and fines for offences against children and enacting provisions criminalizing exploitation of minors and pornography.

2. Annulling certain provisions of Act No. 550 of 24 July 1996 concerning the adoption of a health record for every newborn and replacing them with new provisions, with a view to applying them to all children regardless of their nationality, and imposing penalties on contraveners.

3. Adding new provisions to Article 5 of the Act on Associations, in order to allow a juvenile under 15 years of age to belong to associations and to be a member of the governing body under specific conditions.

4. Amending certain provisions of Act No. 220 of 29 May 2000 on the rights of persons with disabilities and adding new provisions concerning children with disabilities.

5. Adding a new article 218/1 to the Code of Obligations and Contracts, in order to give the "mandatory guardian" the authority to administer the funds of his children both by marriage or through adoption in denominations that recognize adoption.

6. Amending certain provisions of Act No. 382 of 4 November 1994 on television and radio broadcasting, with a view to protecting children and respecting their rights.

7. Adding a new article to the Legislative Decree No. 104 of 30 June 1977, as amended by Act No. 330 of 18 May 1994, containing the amendment of certain provisions of the Publications Act enacted on 14 September 1962, with a view to protecting children and respecting their rights.

8. Amending certain provisions of Act No. 422 of 6 June 2002 on the protection of minors that are in conflict with the law or are at risk and on supplementing it with new provisions, with a view to raising the age of penal responsibility, expanding the concept of social protection and establishing competent organs... It is worth noting that this was the only draft law submitted to the competent parliamentary committee.

9. A draft law on the national child rights code in Lebanon.

23. The Higher Council for Childhood has sought to submit these draft laws to the Council of Ministers, but the changes that the government has undergone on the one hand and the paralysis of the legislative process on the other hand have prevented their submission for discussion within the legal frameworks in force.

II. National Plan for Childhood

24. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched "the National Programme for Local Socio-Economic Development" which aims at contributing to the implementation of the content of the national strategy for social development, undertakes to operationalize and develop the role of development services centres in designing regional development programmes and plans in partnership with the relevant local partners, supports social development projects within the existing mechanism based on the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially youth, works with pregnant prisoners to improve the quality of services provided to them in prison, as well as supports and equips health centres to accommodate the increasing services necessary to meet the needs of displaced Syrians in Lebanon.

25. In the context its efforts to develop the National Plan for Childhood, the Higher Council for Childhood initiated the preparation of sectoral plans, drafts of which were completed, including: the protection, rehabilitation and integration of street children; the participation of children; early childhood; children with disabilities; children trafficking (will be presented in the context of the report). These were the subject of discussion with the parties concerned, but only the national strategy to protect and shield children from violence was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2012.

26. As a consequence of the aggravated crisis resulting from the intensive displacement from Syria to Lebanon, the Lebanese State realized that dealing with crises from a response perspective is an indirect means to use this assistance to strengthen the infrastructure with a view to protecting marginalized groups after the crisis is over. Therefore, since October 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs implements the "National Plan to Protect Women and Children" in partnership with UNICEF and with funding from the European Union, with a view to improving the

quality of life and mitigating the risks impeding the protection of women and vulnerable children through the strengthening of the role of the Ministry of Social Affairs as the national authority sponsoring and regulating the two sectors of child protection and gender-based violence, and providing a safe environment and support services directly to the family.

III. Collecting information

27. The Central Statistics Department is one of the major institutions responsible for collecting data and statistics in Lebanon. Moreover, all government departments collect their own data. The Educational Centre for Research and Development maintains the education information base at the national level and is tasked with developing indicators for the Lebanese educational system and following-up their development, as well as conducting core statistical studies on the different components of the education system. Academic and research institutions, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are key actors in research on children. United Nations organizations and other international organizations also provide essential support for research and data collection. Nevertheless, there is a need for improvements in research and data collection on children, the lack of certain data and research making it difficult to assess the situation in some areas of children's rights.

28. In 2011, by virtue of a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Italy, a "National Centre for Documentation on Children in Lebanon" was established as a resource centre specialized in the area of childhood and containing so far more than one thousand papers and electronic references on children's issues, which constitute a database that facilitate the work of professionals working with children, youth and women, providing them with knowledge, methodologies and successful experiences in Lebanon and the world, and facilitating the work of students and researchers. This centre aims to create a mechanism for streaming, classifying and harmonizing information and making it available to relevant stakeholders.

29. On another level, and within the initiative to strengthen the child protection system of the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF, the latter organization mandated an international expert in children protection information management systems to survey existing information systems in Lebanon used to monitor, document and manage cases of children at risk and victims with a view to proposing a practical and uniform system to document cases of exploitation, violence and abuse, in line with the operating and standard procedures and protection tools. Technical specifications and administrative and technical conditions were set for the development of the child protection case management system in Lebanon under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with the Ministries of the Interior and Municipalities and Justice; terms of reference were also set to mandate a company specialized in information technology to develop the system and begin its application by all those involved with case management.

IV. Coordination

30. For the sake of sustaining partnership and coordination with various stakeholders involved with childhood issues in the public and private sectors, the Higher Council for Childhood established 13 coordination committees covering all areas of the rights of the child (legislation, children with disabilities, health, culture and information, child participation, prevention, protection from violence and abuse, children in conflict with the law or at risk of delinquency, early childhood education, family environment and alternative care, street children, refugee children, protection from abuse through the Internet) with representatives from all ministries, NGOs, trade unions and a number of universities and experts in the field of childhood. These committees play an essential role as a coordinating and networking framework to gain support and backing for the direction and objectives of the Higher Council for Childhood as well as participation in, and provision of substantive support for the preparation of the National Plan for Childhood.

V. Resource allocation

31. Owing to the security situation, the lack of political stability and the turmoil in Lebanon during this period, no public budget of the Lebanese State has been approved since 2005 to date. Therefore, the 12-year rule was adopted for the disbursement of appropriations based on the 2005 budget and on Item No.1, article 60, as amended in accordance with Act No. 4/80 of 7 April 1980 and Act No. 42/88 of 23 June 1988, which provide that: 12-year budgets are based on the permanent appropriations allocated in the budget of the previous year, provided that added and deducted permanent appropriations are taken into account. The amounts transferred from the appropriations of the contingency budget are not considered as being deducted.

32. Among the decisions taken to follow-up the adoption of the 2005 budget item (2) the need to ensure maintenance of the level of social spending for social benefits in the areas of health, education and social services based on existing laws and standards, and thus without prejudice to such benefits. On the basis of that rule, expenditures were estimated in the draft budget in a manner ensuring that social benefits are not decreased and endeavouring to increase them.

33. It should be noted that the ratio of social spending amounted to 25,92 per cent of the total budget in 2005. The public budget adopted in Lebanon does not take into account a budget earmarked for children, but there are several projects and programmes distributed among different ministries that deal with children for which funds are allocated for their implementation.

VI. International assistance

34. The agreements of cooperation with the United Nations organizations operating in Lebanon and international institutions programmes are the main source of support and financing for specialized governmental programmes, based on improving and promoting rights and safeguarding the principle of equality among

individuals in order to reduce disparities in the level of services provided and needs addressed.

VII. Independent monitoring structure

35. On 10/12/2012 the National Plan for Human Rights (2014-2019) was announced by the parliamentary Human Rights Committee in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and forwarded to the Plenary Body of the House of Representatives. This plan addressed 21 sectors covering the areas of human rights.

36. The management and justice and human rights committees in the House of Representatives approved, on 8 April 2014, a draft law on the establishment of an independent National Commission on Human Rights; the proposed law was referred to the Plenary Body of the House of Representatives for formal confirmation.

37. On the other hand, government agencies were established to monitor violations of human rights in general, including: the Human Rights Section in the General Inspectorate of the Internal Security Forces (Decree No. 755/2008), which was tasked with the dissemination of the human rights concepts and their protection from violation within the institution. In 2009, the Ministry of National Defence established the "Office of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights" in the army headquarters to disseminate and teach the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights to officers and members of the Lebanese army.

38. There is currently no independent institution to monitor the proper application of children's rights. However, some NGOs undertake such an independent monitoring alone; it remains, however, fractionated and ineffective as no integrated model experience exists.

VIII. Training and dissemination of the Convention

39. The Higher Council for Childhood adopts training on the rights of the child as a general entry point in all training dealing with children; the Council has prepared a guide for activities related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and used it to train personnel working with children and those responsible for summer camps; this guide is distributed free of charge to NGOs.

40. Special courses on human rights and international humanitarian law were added to the training curricula of military units of the Lebanese armed forces and the internal security forces.

41. In order to introduce children in a simple manner to the articles of the Convention, the Higher Council for Childhood organized in 2008 the "Lebanese Children Forum" which brought together some 100 children from different groups and regions of Lebanon aged between 9 and 16 years; during this meeting they drafted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in their own style, of which 40,000 copies were printed in Arabic and models of which were prepared in English and French; it was also issued in Armenian. Moreover, many publications and training guides to raise awareness about children's rights were produced, and the

website of the Higher Council for Childhood was established (www.atfalouna.gov.lb).

42. UNICEF produced an educational game about the Convention's articles and published the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its entirety in a version suitable for adolescents. Save the Children also issued a booklet entitled "Know your rights and responsibilities", and other publications.

IX. Cooperation with NGOs

43. The associations of the civil sector play a partner role for the Lebanese State in providing various services to all segments of society, particularly the most marginalized groups, through the delegation of authority to these associations by virtue of contracts concluded with them by government departments on the basis of mutually agreed financial contributions, but are often unable to provide appropriate coverage for beneficiaries. Moreover, this contractual relationship is not subject to systematic or scientific control based on specific and transparent criteria.

44. With a view to strengthening cooperation with NGOs in Lebanon, the Higher Council for Childhood established coordination committees which comprise approximately 130 NGOs involved with all child rights issues within a participatory approach and coordination of services for the benefit of children.

Chapter II

Definition of the child

45. There is no clear and uniform definition of the concept of "child" in the Lebanese legislation; article 215 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts states that "Every person who has reached 18 years of age is competent to assume obligations, unless declared incompetent by virtue of a legal text". Act No. 422/2002 identified the age of 18 years to take protective measures concerning juveniles at risk. There are variations in the Personal Status Laws between the religious denominations recognized in Lebanon as regards the minimum age set for marriage. We shall discuss the age of criminal responsibility and the age of access to work in subsequent chapters.

Chapter III

General principles

I. The right to non-discrimination

46. The Lebanese laws guarantee non-discrimination between individuals, the State is making efforts to promote equitable development and provide services to marginalized groups through the National Programme for the Poorest Families, but the limited financial resources, the poor economic and social conditions, the

deteriorating security situation and the lack of political stability are factors that affect the access of children and vulnerable groups to services equitably.

47. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paragraphs 99-112.

II. The best interest of the child

48. Due to the lack of a uniform law for children in Lebanon, the child's best interest is not clearly articulated at the national legislation level, except in the law of juveniles in conflict with the law and at risk which provides for taking the interest of the juvenile into account when proposing measures for his protection.

49. During 2009, judicial decisions were issued that shocked in a positive way the general system of children protection, through the approval of the Court of Cassation of the discretionary trends of some juvenile judges; this is exemplified by the approval of the decision of juvenile court judge President "Fawzi Khamis" imposing that the child should remain at his mother's house even though he reached the age at which custody must be transferred according to Sharia courts to his father, citing the child's best interest criterion. There is also the decision of juvenile court judge President "Janah Obeid" ordering the father to pay the expenses of his underage children who are in the custody of their mother.

50. The "Act protecting women and other family members from domestic violence" was promulgated on 1 April 2014, securing the protection of the child side by side with the mother victim, as provided for by Act No. 422 concerning the protection of children in danger; however, the decision to keep the child with his mother is based on the Personal Status Laws that apply on a case-by-case basis. But some of the decisions recently issued by the courts were based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and took into account that the best interest of the child is to stay with his mother; what is important in this context is the independence of the judges and their wisdom in dealing with these issues.

51. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paragraphs 115 to 121.

III. The right to life, survival and development

52. Act No. 162 of 17 August 2011 was promulgated repealing article 562 of the Penal Code which granted mitigating circumstances to a person who kills or harms his wife or one of his ascendants and descendants or his sister if they commit the offence of adultery or in the case of illicit sexual intercourse.

53. For further information on child suicide, refer to Annex, Table 1: Number of Children who have Committed Suicide by Nationality.

IV. Respecting the opinion of the child

54. The Participation Committee of the Higher Council for Childhood has developed a draft strategy on the participation of children based on updating the

laws and regulations guaranteeing the participation of children and the creation of a base to monitor their effective participation, as well as the development and building of the capacity of children and the personnel working with them, and raising awareness and promoting education about the importance of children participation.

55. The Higher Council for Childhood has implemented a number of consultations with children to listen to their opinions about drafts it was working on, including: a strategy to protect and shield children from all forms of violence and exploitation 2009, a national plan for children participation 2010, a code of ethics for media coverage of children and a plan to support children.

56. As part of the cooperation programme between the Higher Council for Childhood and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, the Forum of Lebanon's Children was launched in 2011 with a view to raising awareness and supporting the development of Arab policies on children participation through the monitoring of new global trends and establishing an Arab network in the field of children participation.

57. Also, the "Children's Parliament" was organized in 2011; it was presided by the speaker of the House of Representatives and attended by the Prime Minister and several ministers and deputies. 128 children of different ages and categories of Lebanese and several Arab nationalities participated in this activity. A meeting of the "Children's Council of Ministers" was also held in 2013 bringing together 30 "children ministers" representing State ministers to put forward their problems. The Prime Minister chaired the meeting which was attended by all ministers.

58. The Higher Council for Childhood is currently developing the Children's Parliament project which consists of 128 children (12-15 years old) representing the civil sectors, the civil society institutions and the schools; they come from all Lebanese regions at the rate of 25 children from each governorate. The project aims to educate children and develop their leadership skills for two years; they will be trained on parliamentary procedures, rules and concepts, drafting bills in Parliament, doing research and speaking in public, debating and talking to the media.

59. In 2011, as part of the cooperation programme with the Italian Government, the Ministry of Social Affairs implemented the "child-friendly cities" project in six municipalities with the aim of promoting the participation of children by involving them in decision making at the local level and electing a Municipal Council that undertakes to let the children express their opinions and make their voices heard. Social safety nets aimed at protecting marginalized groups through specific programmes and activities were also established; partner municipalities in this project committed themselves to signing a charter that ensures the partnership between the official Municipal Council and the children's Municipal Council. Twinning operations were also concluded between Italian municipalities and partner municipalities in the programme to promote dialogue and exchange of experiences, and 3 of those municipalities established youth clubs.

60. The Higher Council for Childhood seeks to establish the "National Laboratory of child-friendly cities", with the aim of establishing a comprehensive national mechanism to institutionalize and sustain the concept of child-friendly cities in Lebanon. A specialized committee of experts was established to provide advice and

contribute to the production and development of tools needed to apply the concept of child-friendly cities at the municipal level in Lebanon, and provide technical support for its implementation, within the framework of a strategic vision.

61. There are non-governmental initiatives that actively aim to effectuate the participation of children in Lebanon. In 2009, the "Sustainable Democracy Center", in collaboration with schools and institutions of civil society, created "Citizenship and Peace Clubs" with children and young people from different political and sectarian affiliations and from several Lebanese regions, who were between 13 and 17 years of age. In 2011, model legal amendments to the provisions of the internal regulations and statutes of the associations were proposed guaranteeing the participation of children and young people under 20 years of age in the functioning of the association; basically, the initiative calls for the creation of a "Children's Council" that participates with the "Board of Directors" and the "Plenary Body" in the decision making process within the organization without any legal liability on the child.

62. As for the procedure to be followed for listening to the opinion of the child, the concerned authorities aim to take steps in this area. In penal law, and based on Act No. 422/2002, a child is to be consulted concerning the option of applying alternative educational measures.

Chapter IV

Civil rights and freedoms

I. Birth registration, name and nationality, preservation of identity

63. The multiple-indicator cluster survey of 2009 indicated an increase in birth registration rate in Lebanon (99,6 for girls, 99,5 for boys); the number of children aged 0-59 months who were not registered amounts to 15 children, mostly from North Lebanon Governorate.

64. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paragraphs 129 to 144.

65. The Higher Council for Childhood seeks, within the National Committee to Address the Situation of the Unregistered Lebanese Children, which consists of representatives of relevant ministries, directorates trade unions and NGOs, to raise awareness among parents and communities of the adverse consequences on children as a result of their non-registration, and to find legal and practical solutions for this category of marginalized children. It has submitted proposed legislative amendments as follows:

- Amend article 12 of the Registration of Personal Status Documents Act to add the mother and the juvenile court judge to the stakeholders who can request the registration of a newborn, as it stipulates that, one year after the date of birth, an infant can only be registered by a judicial decision issued in the deliberation room, at the request of the Public Prosecutor, the person having the relationship or the father;

- Amend article 25 of Act No. 422 on the Protection of Minors in Conflict with the Law or at Risk so as to consider the unregistered minor as being at risk and subject to the protection provided by this article;
- Add a paragraph to article 501 of the Penal Code concerning the neglect of family duties so as to make the neglect of parents to register the newborn a criminally punishable offence.

66. Similarly, this Committee undertook a legal study on legal and practical mechanisms for birth registration, issued a simplified guidebook on birth registration mechanisms in Lebanese communities, produced a short film and awareness-raising materials and added a page to the child's health record issued by the Ministry of Public Health on how to register a newborn. It has also conducted specialized training courses for lawyers, social workers, mayors and judges.

67. According to an unpublished field study conducted by the Frontiers organization in 2012 on statelessness, estimates indicate that the number of unregistered persons in Lebanon amounts to approximately 40,000 persons.

68. The problem of unregistered persons worsened with the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon. According to the statistics of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees on birth registration, 9000 Syrian children were born in Lebanon between 1 August 2013 and 30 April 2014; the survey showed that 69 per cent of Syrian newborns lacked official birth certificates because in most cases their parents lack the required documentation from the Syrian civil registers.

69. In 2014, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees provided nearly 40,000 Syrian refugees with information on birth registration through awareness-raising sessions and 9694 families of newborn children received individual counselling on birth registration. The High Commissioner for Refugees also provided training on birth registration to 575 humanitarian workers throughout Lebanon and raised awareness about the importance of birth registration and associated procedures through radio, SMSs and the distribution of more than 250,000 posters and leaflets, as well as an animated film.

70. On 31 May 2010, Decree No. 4176 was issued stipulating that a courtesy residence permit be granted to the foreign husband of a Lebanese woman one year after their marriage, and to the children of a Lebanese woman married to a foreign husband, whether adults or minors or whether they are employed or not.

71. On 16 June 2009, Judge President "John Cazi" issued a bold decision which grants the Lebanese nationality to minor children of a Lebanese mother following the death of her foreign husband, citing the equal treatment of the Lebanese mother by birth and her children and the Lebanese mother by naturalization and her children. This decision, however, is still pending before the Court of Cassation and has not been settled yet.

II. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

72. This right is safeguarded in the Lebanese Constitution, where its article 9 stipulates that "The freedom of belief is absolute and the State, praising God Almighty, respects all religions and doctrines and guarantees the freedom to

worship under its protection, provided that this does not violate the public order; it also assures peoples from different denominations that the Personal Status System and the religious interests shall be respected". Lebanese courts have traditionally upheld this freedom and protected it from any infringement.

III. The right of association and peaceful assembly

73. The Lebanese law guarantees the right of the individual to create an association (sport, scout, youth), and to exercise his right to vote or stand for election to any governing body in any association for all Lebanese who have completed 18 years of age.

74. In 2012, the Youth and Sports Committee of the House of Representatives unanimously approved an amendment to article 5 of the Associations Act of 3 August 1909 as follows: "Any person who has completed 15 years of age may, upon approval of his guardian, belong to an association as an inactive member without the right to vote, to be a member of its governing body, to represent the association in any way or to take decisions in its name. A member of the association acquires the full membership rights to hold all the positions mentioned above by standing for elections upon completing 18 years of age provided he was not convicted of a heinous offence or misdemeanour"; this proposal is still awaiting approval by the House of Representatives.

IV. The right to privacy

75. The Lebanese Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure safeguard the privacy of individuals and guarantee the protection of their personal belongings and reputation. The Juveniles Act No. 422/2002 also prohibits the publication of the juvenile picture and the proceedings of the investigation and trial, and imposes penalties on violators.

V. Access to information from a variety of sources, and protection from harmful substances

76. The status of children in Lebanon is determined by a number of social, cultural and political influences; the perception of children is very closely linked to the social characteristics and cultural heritage of the society. Social education institutions play a prominent role in the development of the cultural personality of the child.

77. In 2014, the Ministry of Public Information submitted a new draft law concerning audiovisual media in Lebanon to the Parliamentary Information Committee, taking into account the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the right of expression, respect for privacy, protection from all what causes him harm and consideration for those with special needs.

78. In 2013, the Higher Council for Childhood launched the "Code of Ethics for Media Coverage of Children" with a view to establishing a legal framework to regulate the media and those working in it in Lebanon, and abiding by guiding

principles when dealing with childhood issues in the media; it is not, however, binding for the media. The Code was issued in a booklet and a poster and distributed to media institutions; several guiding meetings were also held about it.

79. The dissemination of information through the media is subject to the Model Book of Conditions No. 382/94, which aims to implement flexible and purposeful programming as regards broadcast time and the ages of the viewers in order to safeguard public morality and national and domestic bonds, and combat terrorism and racial or religious segregation. There are very few programmes for children; special television stations for children providing interactive educational programmes have been established to broadcast health, social and religious outreach programmes in which children express their views and participate by providing their experiences, aspirations and challenges. The Audio-visual Media Act does not provide for special programmes for persons with special needs; it is left to individual radio and television stations to broadcast what they believe is suitable for this category of children.

80. The Ministry of Culture, in the framework of its policy aimed at supporting books and public libraries, purchases children's books in different languages with a view to promoting children's section in these libraries. International book fairs also play a prominent role in providing the greatest possible selection of children's books in foreign languages. A network of 120 public libraries is supported by the Ministry of Culture with children's books and all knowledge resources and modern technological equipment and social media, as children constitute about 70 per cent of library visitors. In April of each year, on the occasion of the "Reading Week", public libraries and NGOs involved with libraries, including the "Sabil" association, organize diverse cultural and artistic activities, meetings with book writers, workshops and symposia on how to read for children and annual festivals including story tellers, puppet theatres, artistic presentations and circus shows, that are open to the public.

81. Individual initiatives to support gifted children are launched by parents, schools and NGOs through competitions and artistic ateliers, by providing all the means and tools to ensure the development of their intellectual, scientific and artistic creativity; many such children receive local and foreign awards.

82. The Higher Council for Childhood established the Committee for the Protection of Children from the Internet Threats which developed a code of conduct to define the roles and responsibilities of service providers to ensure the protection of children from the risks and dangers associated with the Internet. It also drafted a bill to amend the Penal Code in order to address crimes involving the exploitation of minors in pornographic material on the Internet; but, despite these efforts, Internet cafes remain accessible in cities and in remote villages without supervision or controls, and children spend most of their leisure time sitting in front of computers; mobile phones have also facilitated the access of Internet for children. The Higher Council for Childhood and several civil society institutions have been actively managing children's awareness and education seminars on the safe use of the Internet, as well as distributing numerous publications aimed at both the parents and the children themselves.

83. With the increasing pervasion of information technology, the Ministry of Communications has made available the patriarchal control service

("Parentalcontrol") to help parents remove inappropriate contents and inspect sites accessed by children. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities established the Office for Combating Informatics Crimes in the Judicial Police Unit of the Internal Security Forces, which seeks to monitor, investigate and prosecute all informatics crimes. The "Hemaya" association, with support from World Vision and in coordination with the Higher Council for Childhood, developed a new page ("e-helpline") to receive complaints from children about violations they are subjected to through the Internet. The Communications Regulatory Authority launched a website ("e-aman") to educate parents, teachers and students about online safety.

Chapter V

Violence against children

I. Abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

84. Act no 286 of 30 April 2014 was promulgated providing for the annulment of Item (1) of Article 186 of the Penal Code and replacing it with the following text: "The law allows: 1- the types of non-violent disciplinary actions taken by parents in respect of their children, provided they leave no trace on the body of the children or cause damage to their physical or mental health".

85. Act No. 293 of 1 April 2014, the "Act protecting women and other family members from domestic violence", was promulgated defining domestic violence as: "Any act, omission of an act or threat with either, by a family member against one or more family members according to the concept reflected in the definition of the family, which involves one of the crimes covered by this law and which results in murder or physical, psychological, sexual or economic abuse". This Act also imposes stiffer penalties on persons who coerce women and minors to beg or commit debauchery, corruption or prostitution; it provides for penalties to be increased in the event of the offence being committed within the family, and to be redoubled if any offence was accompanied by violence or threat, especially if the offence is committed by one spouse against the other. It also includes preventive and protective measures to ensure care and protection of the child. However, women's associations in Lebanon have expressed reservation on this Act.

86. Act No. 422/2002 ensures the protection of children at risk, as it gives the juvenile court judge the right to impose social protection measures based on article 27 thereof, such as to keep the child as much as possible in his natural environment, and to task a social worker or a social institution with monitoring and providing advice and counselling for parents and guardians and assisting them in his upbringing and submit a periodic report on the development of his condition. The Act also gives the child the right to complain, and exempts specialists from the professional confidentiality obligation in order to allow them to report cases of child abuse.

87. The Higher Council for Childhood has submitted a draft amendment to Act No. 422/2002 that is being discussed in the parliamentary committees, in which it

has extended the concept of social protection and distinguished it from judicial protection, identified more clearly the cases in which a child is considered at risk and guaranteed hearing the child in all judicial and administrative proceedings. It also provides for the creation of a "Juvenile Social Protec[illegible] Unit" in the Ministry of Social Affairs with affiliated sub-units in the Governor[illegible] comprising a number of juvenile protection counsellors who undertake social pr[illegible]ction measures for juveniles. Moreover, a hotline to the "Juvenile Social Protection Unit" is to receive calls with a view to helping, counselling and referring to the competent authorities.

88. The Lebanese Council of Ministers approved on 12/12/2012 the national strategy to protect and shield children from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, which includes 5 key areas covering general strategic goals. This strategy is based on the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against children. Among the challenges that may hinder the implementation of the strategy are the nonexistence of the budgets necessary for the implementation of the goals, the lack of institutional capacities, the inadequacy of planning and the insufficient coordination among relevant agencies in the official sector.

89. During 2012, a set of ministerial circulars were issued which reflected the growing interest of the concerned ministries with the phenomenon of violence, starting with the prevention of violence, going through monitoring and reporting of cases, and concluding with addressing them promptly; they were are as follows:

- The Ministry of Public Health warns workers on the front lines dealing with children in the health sector against neglecting to report any cases of violence against children that reach health centres of all types, failing which they would be liable to disciplinary and criminal prosecution;
- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education bans the abuse of students by professors and teachers;
- Internal notes in the Ministries of Justice and Interior and Municipalities to rapidly settle cases involving children and respect for privacy.

90. Concurrently with these circulars that were issued to counter the phenomenon of violence against children and their exploitation, two joint plans of action were developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, aimed at creating a joint mechanism to monitor cases, through the designation of resource persons, and referring them to the Ministry of Social Affairs for follow up according to due process.

91. For its part, the Ministry of Social Affairs developed, during 2013, a mechanism to operationalize the social protection system at the central and local levels, through the designation of resource persons for child protection from among the female social workers and counsellors in the Ministry and the developmental services centres, in addition to training them, developing their capacity and improving their skills for dealing, on the one hand, with children at risk, and on the other hand, with the work mechanism,.

92. On 19 September 2012, the Minister of Social Affairs, with the support of the First Lady, launched a national awareness campaign under the slogan "No to Violence Against Children", which included television spots encouraging citizens to

report cases of abuse of children by calling the number 1714; this was an advertisement for a telephone service to receive complaints of child abuse, but it was not free and not available every day; it should also be pointed out that this number was also assigned to receive the citizens' calls concerning the services provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Juvenile Protection Service within the Ministry was mandated with the follow up and support of cases. Although not fully ready, and with a weak system of protection for children in Lebanon and limited specialized services, the working group was able to satisfy the needs within available resources. In less than a month after its launch, and during the advertisement campaign launched to introduce it, this group received about 80 calls including 48 calls reporting and seeking advice on violence, whereas the average number of cases followed up is about three cases daily.

93. On the other hand, the Ministry of Social Affairs concluded, on 21 September 2010, a cooperation agreement with the Italian Government, represented by the Italian Embassy in Beirut, on "Strengthering the Lebanese institutions and supporting the most marginalized groups at the local level", which contains several components, including, the establishment and operation of the child support line in Lebanon. Consequently, after launching the campaign mentioned above, an amendment of the objectives of this component and its action plan was introduced with a view to develop the existing line according to model criteria that take into account international criteria. Among the activities carried out by the programme:

- Conduct a survey of all official and private resources available at the local level, whose work intersects with the issue of children protection in Lebanon, thus allowing a clear mapping of available resources and building a national referral system guaranteeing that the children victims benefit from available services of good quality.
- Prepare model cooperation and partnership agreements with various governmental, civil and private entities in light of this survey, in order to provide various services based on the mentioned referral system.
- Draft the administrative and regulatory operational procedures for the mentioned line in cooperation with a number of relevant experts and specialists.
- Carry out a survey of children's opinion about the creation of the support line in order to identify their positions and suggestions regarding this service, as well as to establish the primary rules of the child participation principle.

The programme currently works towards the institutionalization and setting up of the child support line and developing its administrative and managerial structure with a view to officially launching its services in 2016.

94. Some NGOs have also placed telephone lines at the service of citizens to receive calls about violations against children and requests for assistance, advice or specialized services.

95. Annually since 2006, on the occasion of the World Day for the Protection of Children from Abuse in November, the Higher Council for Childhood, in cooperation and coordination with NGOs, international organizations and government departments working in the area of child protection, has organized

public awareness and education campaigns nationwide with the aim of raising awareness among the public against all forms of violence and exploitation and ensuring the protection of children through the production of advertising and information materials bearing the slogan "Protecting Children from Violence: their Right…our Duty" and involving NGOs, scouts and voluntary associations, educational and security institutions, and activists in the areas of social, health, education and humanitarian services.

96. In late 2012, the national study on "Strengthening the Child Protection System in Lebanon: Challenges and Opportunities", that was carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Higher Council for Childhood in cooperation with UNICEF in Lebanon, Saint Joseph University and the Frontiers organization, was issued. The study aimed to assess the national child protection system and its lines of work and highlight its weaknesses and imbalances. It concluded by proposing short-term measures and long term reforms aimed at developing services at the national and local levels, developing the regulatory framework and building partnerships for change.

97. As a follow-up to this study, during 2013-2014, the relevant partners (the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF in cooperation with the Jesuit University) undertook the development of standard operating procedures for managing cases of child protection at the national level and associated tools, within a participatory approach that included representatives from relevant ministries (Social Affairs, Justice and Interior and Municipalities) and active NGOs, which allowed the testing of the tools and their adjustment to take into account the practical reality. The first phase of the project was followed by a capacity-building phase where 130 interveners from the civil and formal sectors were trained on the procedures referred to above, including family mediation, through a 60-hour training curriculum with the participation of international experts. In the subsequent phase, the Ministry of Social Affairs will seek to adopt the operating procedures and the tools needed to manage cases, and publish and disseminate them at the local level.

98. The Higher Council for Childhood organized during 2007 consultative meetings in Lebanese regions to present the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children with a view to sensitizing local communities on the importance of combating violence against children, identifying follow-up mechanisms and integrating these recommendations in intervention programmes at the local level.

99. The Ministry of Social Affairs continued its support of NGOs working on prevention and on addressing cases of child protection through the annual contracts it concludes with these organizations to provide a number of services for children at risk and victims. Services are provided by a specialized team in day centres or internal centres receiving cases referred by the judge or the public prosecutor and cases for which remaining within the family represents a real threat, without any discrimination based on ethnicity or culture.

100. Also, most specialized associations that house children victims and at risk provide, in addition to their treatment, care and rehabilitation services, follow-up, counselling and psychological support. Among these associations is the "Caring for Children of War Association" which provides pharmaceutical and therapeutic services and psychological counselling within a multidisciplinary team, at the

expense of the Ministry of Public Health and some donor organizations. (See Annex, Table 2: Number of Cases Undergoing a Psychological Follow-Up by the Caring for Children of War Association).

II. Prohibiting all forms of harmful practices

101. Within the framework of the national campaign to protect underage girls from early marriage organized by the National Commission for Lebanese Women Affairs, the Commission prepared a study on "Protecting Underage Girls from Early Marriage: Reality and Aspiration" in 2014, and a draft law aimed at regulating underage marriage by requiring that the juvenile court judge be consulted to obtain a marriage permission for underage girls. In the event of denial, the marriage is not invalid, but the family and the authority that concludes the marriage contract must pay a fine.

102. The Higher Council for Childhood, in cooperation with the Lebanese Women's Council, also organized two awareness-raising workshops on early marriage aimed at investigators in the internal security forces and media professionals.

103. According to the multiple-indicator cluster survey of 2009, the proportion of women who were married under the age of 18 years was 13.4 per cent, 23.1 per cent of whom had a primary education, and only 2 per cent reached the university education.

III. Sexual exploitation and abuse, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

104. If a child is subjected to sexual abuse he is considered at risk, and must be protected according to Act No. 422; also, the draft amendment of this Act adopts the definitions contained in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Higher Council for Childhood has also prepared a draft law to penalize exploitation of minors in pornography.

105. In 2012, a Ministry of Tourism circular was issued on prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 18 years in nightclubs. A joint work plan was prepared with the Ministry of Social Affairs to establish a coordination mechanism between both ministries to report and follow-up cases.

106. The Higher Council for Childhood, in cooperation with the "Enough Violence and Exploitation" organization and with the support of the "Save the Children" organization, prepared a study in 2008 on "Sexual abuse of children: the situation in Lebanon" which showed that 16.1 per cent of children in Lebanon are subjected to sexual harassment, 45.1 per cent are subjected to physical violence, 40.8 per cent witness domestic violence and 64.9 per cent are subjected to mental/psychological violence.

107. In 2010, a study on the training needs of professionals working with children concluded that there was a lack of specialized care institutions to receive cases of sexually abused children, a scarcity of human and financial resources and a shortage

of specialists. In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs-the Higher Council for Childhood signed a memorandum of understanding with the Association House of Hope France on "Protecting and shielding children from sexual violence", with a view to developing the capacities of workers in the field of sexual violence against children. The memorandum included the organization of a series of training courses for employees of associations and institutions contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the development services centres in the first phase. In a second phase, training will be organized for specialists in associations that lodge children at risk. Also, an information meeting was held with journalists on sexual violence.

108. Within the framework of a new memorandum signed in 2013 to follow-up the training of employees on "sexual violence" and of female social workers on the programme entitled "Promoting self-protection behaviour in children to counter sexual violence", the implementation was initiated in 2014 of a "Quantitative and qualitative national study of sexual violence against children in Lebanon", which was aimed at two categories of school and non-school children in the age group 7 to 18 years; it was based on consultative meetings for the age group 7-9 years, whereas it used forms to be filled out for the age group 10-18 years. About 33 female social workers were also trained as field investigators to fill out the forms, and guidance was prepared on how to conduct the study (code of conduct for field worker, parental consent, referral, approval of schools and educational institutions, form implementation guide...). A network of female therapeutic psychologists was established to assist investigators in anticipation of any crisis or trauma that might arise during the implementation of the form with the child.

109. However, several difficulties impeded the work on this study, most notably the sensitivity of the subject which led educational institution to refuse participation, the difficulty of reaching non-school children and the limited funding. Nevertheless, the results of this study are expected to be issued at the end of 2015.

110. The Higher Council for Childhood and the "Enough Violence and Exploitation" organization prepared a training package entitled "Marching towards safety" aimed at sensitizing children to self-protection through a range of situations that they may be confronted with using an active approach. Social worker received training on this package in different regions, and they, in turn, passed it on to children and parents in a series of targeted meetings.

111. NGOs that lodge victims of sexual abuse ensure their care, rehabilitation and psychological recovery. Also, the Ministry of Justice, through a contract with the Caring for Children of War association, provides psychiatric follow-up services for children victims, upon a decision by the juvenile court judge. (See Annex, Table 3: Number of cases followed-up psychologically upon a decision by the juvenile court judge)

IV. The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment

112. Lebanon takes measures to prevent and combat torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It ratified the Optional Protocol to the

Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on 5/9/2008. The parliamentary Human Rights Commission has prepared a draft law against torture in accordance with the definition contained in the Convention against torture and the adoption of penalties commensurate with the crime, pending submission to the plenary of the House of Representatives for adoption. The draft law on the establishment of an independent national human rights body also includes the establishment of an independent body for the prevention of torture, and is also awaiting the approval of the House of Representatives.

113. The Lebanese Council of Ministers Decree number 34 dated 7/3/2012 was issued concerning the adoption of a national strategy for the transfer of the Prison Administration competence to the Ministry of Justice with respect to the creation of a specialized penal institution within the Prison Administration under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Justice. On 30/10/2012, work started on studies, texts and principles needed to integrate the Prison Directorate in the Ministry of Justice.

114. Procedural measures have also been taken by the organs concerned with the prevention of torture, including:

- On 9/5/2011 a circular was issued to the military judicial police concerning the obligation to comply with the provisions of article 47 of the code of criminal procedure which insure the protection of the suspect from any acts of torture in the preliminary stage of the investigation, and guarantee for him the rights stipulated in the Convention Against Torture;
- The Committee Against Torture was created to investigate cases of torture in the detention centres of the internal security forces, which reports directly to the Director General to take appropriate measures according to each case;
- In 2012, applicable instructions were issued by the General Directorate of Public Security concerning the Convention Against Torture and an Inspection Commission was created to oversee and ensure the application of the instructions and monitor and follow-up the complaints and objections of detainees;
- The Ministry of National Defence added a definition of the crime of torture in the applicable instructions of the general military regime applied in the Lebanese army.

115. The teaching of human rights became mandatory in the Internal Security Forces Institute for all members, as well as the code of conduct which includes provisions on respecting human rights, abstaining from the use of violence and refraining from imposing any form of cruel punishment on persons. The curriculum also includes training on community policing, international law and domestic violence. Training is also provided to prison personnel to deal with inmates in a professional manner. Moreover, courses preparing instructors in international humanitarian law are being organized and a code of general principles for the conduct of the military in the Lebanese army is being adopted.

116. In the case of deprivation of liberty, despite the efforts to adopt measures other than the deprivation of liberty in the case of juveniles in conflict with the law, about 20 per cent of judgements against juveniles are measures of deprivation of liberty.

Also, pretrial detention can be long in some cases, and Lebanon seeks to take measures to address this issue.

117. Among the measures to improve the conditions of detention, a manual was prepared in 2011 by the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, about the scientific methodology of inspecting prisons in order to ensure good management, health safety and rehabilitation in Lebanese prisons.

118. Since 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs has established a Development Services Center in Roumieh prison in order to receive new adult detainees, undertake social investigation, provide them with personal supplies and refer them to specialized services within the prison. The work done by this Centre for the benefit of juveniles in conflict with the law is limited to offering them language courses; the number of beneficiaries of this service amounted to about 150 juveniles.

Chapter VI

Family environment and alternative care

119. The Lebanese laws governing the family and family affairs are subject to the Religious Personal Status Laws of each denomination. There is no uniform law except with respect to cases of exposure to risk or to violence, as provided for in article 2 of Act No. 293 of 7/5/2004 on the "Protection of women and other family members from domestic violence"; the meaning of the following terms, wherever they occur in the Act, is as follows: family: includes any of the spouses, the father and mother of either of them, the brothers and sisters, the ascendants and descendants whether legitimate or illegitimate and those bound by way of adoption or marriage up to the second degree, or by custody, guardianship or sponsorship of an orphan, or a stepfather or a stepmother.

I. Parental guidance

120. The Development Services Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the primary health care centres of the Ministry of Public Health implement education programmes for parents to educate them on the importance of their roles towards their children. Civil society organizations also play a prominent role in guiding parents through various programmes related to the rights of the child, his stages of development and his psychological, health and educational needs, in order to develop his personality and build up his abilities.

121. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paragraphs 145-164.

II. Parental responsibility

122. The responsibility of parents for the care and supervision of their children is enshrined in the Personal Status Laws which address in minute details all matters

concerning the rights of the child with regard to his parents. The Eastern Churches laws recognize the equality of rights and duties between spouses (Act 777) and parental custody or authority is defined as "the totality of parents' rights with regard to their children and their material and moral duties with regard to them until they reach the age of maturity, whether these children are from a legitimate marriage or from a rightful adoption."

123. On 6 June 2011, the age of child custody by the mother in the Sunni denomination was raised to 12 years for both sexes; moreover, the judge may extend this age to 15 years if the child's interest requires that he stays with his mother. The age of custody by the mother in the Christian denominations was raised to 14 years for males and females, while leaving to the judge the discretion of deciding what he deems appropriate for the best interest of the child.

124. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through its various programmes, centres and units, as well as NGOs, provide support services for families by making awareness and outreach programmes available to them and providing them with the skills necessary to educate them about parental and family duties towards their children.

125. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paras. 152-155.

III. Separation from parents

126. Spiritual and religious courts are considered the reference on decisions concerning matters of child care and custody and on deciding what they deem appropriate for his advantage. However, under the applicable legal texts, the public prosecutor and the juvenile court judge may also, based on Act No. 422, take the judicial decision not to keep the child in his natural environment or deliver him, as a protection measure, to a specialized social institution contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in case it is established, through investigations and trials, that the parents or guardians of the child are the source of danger; in such a case, the decision is implemented by order of the juvenile court judge and under his supervision and control.

IV. Family reunification

127. The competent organs in the Lebanese State endeavour to reunite the family so as to facilitate the entry and exit of children to meet their parents according to a number of bilateral agreements based on the 1967 Vienna Convention. To this end, more cooperation agreements were concluded with the Swiss Confederation in 2006 and with the Australian Government in 2009.

V. Recovery of child support

128. The Personal Status Laws for each denomination has assigned the task of identifying those rights to the spiritual, religious and civil courts. The implementation of judgments and decisions on child support is left to the official procedural authority represented by the implementation organs according to civil

law procedures. Denominational authorities can prevent the implementation of a decision only by having it overridden by a similar decision.

129. For the Catholic denominations: "When estimating child support, the needs of the person for whom it is imposed and the means of the person upon which it is imposed are to be taken into account"; child support is based on the father's salary. Support is distributed equally among family members, the father pays two thirds of his salary to his wife and children and keeps a third. If the wife is employed, she is not entitled to support during the trial. Special privileges are accorded to children in the inheritance or guardianship decision, as article 134 of the Eastern Churches Law stipulates that "emphasis should be placed on safeguarding the rights of the minor and preventing the squander of his inheritance, under the supervision of the diocese, where a special book is placed in which all the necessary expenses are registered.

130. For the Greek Orthodox denomination, child support is incumbent upon the father then upon the mother; parents cooperate in raising their children and bearing their expenses; when they do not exist, the support is incumbent upon the ascendants or relatives (Personal Status Act of 2003).

131. For the Islamic denominations, child support is incumbent upon the father for the duration of custody until the male reaches the age at which he can earn a living and the female is married; child support during custody is estimated according to the child's needs.

132. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paras. 199-205.

VI. Children deprived of their family environment

133. The Ministry of Social Affairs launched a comprehensive reform process in 2005 with a view to establishing conditions and standards for contracting with social welfare institutions, including specifying the legal and regulatory conditions required of associations and institutions, the required services for each category of care, the standards and specifications for these services, the standards and technical and human specifications required at the contracted centre and the documents needed to set up an eligibility file. This study was completed but has not been formally approved.

134. In 2004, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued decision No. 121/1 specifying the categories entitled to benefit from the social welfare institutions it has contracted: in the early childhood phase (0 to 4 years),

- The orphan child who has attained the age of 4 years but is not over 18 years of age;
- The child to whom the definition of "difficult social situation" applies (who has attained the age of 4 years but is not over 18 years of age);
- The child at risk (who has attained the age of 4 years but is not over 18 years of age)

135. Article 4 of this decision also specifies which categories must have their applications accepted in social welfare institutions, pursuant to:

- A referral by a judicial decision.
- A proposal by social workers based on a social investigation with parental or guardian consent.
- A referral by a NGO with parental consent.
- A request from parents or guardians.

136. The social welfare contract stipulates that parents remain in contact with their children in institutions and visit them. It also requires that children be allowed to leave the institutions during weekends and school and summer vacations, unless this represents a danger to them or in case of illness.

137. In 2005, pursuant to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Social Affairs undertook, with the support of UNICEF, a study of social welfare institutions and the conditions of children and residents therein. It concluded with three key recommendations:

- Preventive, with a view to making institutional care the last resort and training the social workers concerned;
- Therapeutic, by transforming social welfare to day care or any form of available alternative care;
- Protective, through supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of services provided, and the involvement of parents and children in the evaluation process.

138. The Social Welfare Section of the Ministry of Social Affairs is in the process of adopting new automated programmes for the classification of cases of children who are accepted in social welfare institutions (physical condition, region, family social status, family problems such as imprisonment or addiction, housing crisis, armed conflicts, etc.). Some of the civil institutions that offer programmes providing services for children within their family environment are also supported, as children benefit from all educational, health, recreational and social services that they need depending on their family circumstances and according to their best interests.

139. (See Annex, Table 4: Distribution of children in social welfare institutions contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs by type of care).

140. It should be noted that the main reason for the increase in the number of care institutions contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs between 2011 and 2014 is due, in the first place, to the deteriorating social and economic situation of many Lebanese families, the increased demand from civil society institutions to enter into contracts with the Ministry in addition to the Syrian displacement crisis. This, in addition to the lack of a clear policy and a systematic vision as regards alternative care in Lebanon and the difficulty of its implementation.

VII. Adoption

141. Taking into account the best interests of the child, a preliminary decision was issued by the Personal Status court in "Jdaideh Almatn" on 8/2/2007 stipulating that the civil courts, not the religious courts, are competent to approve the adoption of a stepfather of the illegitimate minor daughter of his wife; the decision was implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and the illegitimate entry was removed from the identity card of the adopted girl, taking the best interests of the child into account.

142. On 13/5/2009, a decision of the State Council was issued revoking the decision of the Director General of the Personal Status Department who refused to give the claimant individual and family certificates free from any reference to the adoption judgment. As a consequence, the claimant was able to obtain certificates in which it is entered under the heading "Remarks" only that registration was made by virtue of a judgement without reference to the religious court or to adoption.

143. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paras. 223-228.

VIII. Illicit transfer and non-return

144. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paras. 194-198.

IX. Periodic review of institutionalization centres

145. The State is obliged by law to provide appropriate care for children institutionalized in care institutions contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs which in turn controls, monitors and evaluates the work of these institutions by a team of female social workers who periodically visit those contracting institutions, submit reports about them, supervise their proper functioning and issue the necessary instructions in order to provide the best possible service suitable to the interests of the child. In case there are any comments or complaints concerning the institutions by parents or even children, both with regard to different aspects of internal care or concerning education or financial matters, the Social Welfare Section addresses those complaints with the persons concerned.

146. The contract concerning the provision of care that the Ministry of Social Affairs concludes annually with care institutions stipulates the employment of qualified and competent personnel, and that staff should attend specialized training courses. Moreover, female social workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs attend specialized training courses to enhance their skills, activate their role in supervising and controlling the work flow and implement the "welfare system".

147. Some NGOs offer special protection and assistance to children through programmes providing care, rehabilitation and psychological and social support, in addition to social reintegration.

148. For further information, please refer to the third national report, paras. 229-234.

Chapter VII

Basic health and welfare

I. Children with disabilities

149. The Lebanese Government gives great consideration to children with disabilities through the ministries of Social Affairs and Education and Higher Education in terms of the application of law No. 220/2000 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in Lebanon. To this end, relevant government departments have taken the following legislative and administrative measures:

- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education issued Decree No. 16417/2006 which determines the cases of exemption for persons with learning difficulties from the official intermediate school certificate examinations, and Decree No. 16614/2006 on the exemption of students with special needs, such as extremely gifted students, from pursuing the traditional years of schooling at the general pre-university level;
- The Ministry of Public Works issued Decree No. 7194 of 16/12/2011 specifying construction standards to be adhered to in all privately owned and public use buildings. The Directorate of Land and Maritime Transport has also developed a plan for the transport sector involving the inclusion of special provisions concerning the protection of children and persons with disabilities in the specifications of tenders used for purchasing new public transportation buses;
- The Ministry of Tourism issued Decision No. 16 of 22 January 2011 which amended previous decrees with a view to preparing new classification criteria for the tourism enterprises concerning the ease of movement of persons with disabilities within them;
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports issued Decree No. 213/2006, and amendments thereof, on organizing competitions and related activities involving youth of both sexes with special needs in Lebanon and Decision No. 90/1/2007 concerning the technical specifications related to sports, youth and scout associations and federations, and sports associations and federations of children with disabilities;
- The Council of Ministers approved in 2014 the exemption of returning sports missions of persons with disabilities from the travellers' exit fee pursuant to a letter from the associations involved with sport of persons with disabilities and the opinion of the Ministry of Social Affairs;
- The Ministry of Labour Decision No. 56/2 of 2013 reducing the worth of certificates of deposit required when recruiting foreign staff for domestic work in houses inhabited by disabled persons;

- The Children with Disabilities Committee of the Higher Council for childhood was formed in 2006 through an administrative decision of the Minister of Social Affairs; it includes representatives from the concerned ministries and associations. It has prepared a draft strategy for improving the situation of children with disabilities in Lebanon around the topics of inclusive education, enabling environment, vocational training, sports for persons with disabilities, health care and specialized media.

150. Since its inception, the Ministry of Social Affairs seeks to provide integrated services through the Section for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, the Model Centre for Persons with Disabilities, the programme to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities and its affiliated centres scattered in various regions of Lebanon. Statistics of the programme to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities between 2004 and 2014 show that the number of people holding a personal disability card is 42,128, while the number of children registered stands at 10,390 (4,067 females and 6,323 males), bearing in mind that disability registration is a voluntary, not mandatory, process. The services provided by the Ministry include: diagnosis of learning difficulties and scholastic hindrances (more than 90 per cent), psychological testing, IQ testing for children under 18 years of age, linguistic diagnosis and treatment for children under 13 years of age, provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation services, providing artificial limbs only to those injured by mines or cluster bombs, tax exemptions, free consultations and medicines in Development Services Centres, providing education, rehabilitation and training for persons with disabilities, issuing personal disability cards and providing limited financial aid.

151. The Ministry of Social Affairs concludes contracts with institutions specialized in education, rehabilitation, care and training for all types of disabilities and ages without distinction between regions; there were approximately 95 such institution in 2014. It also follows-up, monitors and supervises these institutions. Since 2012, a provision has been introduced to the contract that is concluded with the specialized institutions concerning the commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its application in their programmes. The number of actual beneficiaries currently in care institutions stands at 7,579. Thanks to the efforts made to increase awareness among parents of the right of the child to remain within his family, the proportion of institutionalized children decreased: from 34 per cent in 2004 to 20 per cent in 2013, while this percentage declined in 2014 to 19,37 per cent (37 per cent for females and 62 per cent for males). The number of beneficiaries of learning difficulties services increased from 625 children in 2004 to 927 in 2014, the number of severe disabilities (mental, cerebral palsy, autism, multiple disabilities) also increased, while the number of audio and simple motor disabilities decreased due to the possibility of their receiving education in normal educational institutions. A new classification of categories was also adopted such as separating autism from mental disability, and developing vocational education. The category of "early education" was also introduced but has not been adopted yet for lack of funds.

152. (See Annex, Table 5: Distribution of children with disabilities by province, type of disability and type of care within institutions contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs).

153. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a mechanism aimed at seeking information and receiving and following-up complaints through number (1,714); the

Observatory on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was also established, which includes a network of civil society associations and NGOs to provide an interactive complaints system.

154. Institutions and associations registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs, persons with disabilities and parents participate in decision making through their representation within the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities which is the final authority that develops the overall policy and proposes plans and projects.

155. In 2012, the Minister of Education and Higher Education transmitted the "National plan for integrating persons with special needs", that was prepared by the Educational Centre for Research and Development, to the Council of Ministers with a view to approving it; this, however, did not happen for lack of resources required for its implementation. The Ministry established the "Special Education Unit" by virtue of decision No. 27/M/2012 to address matters related to students with special needs in public schools. It also opened a free centre to care for those with learning difficulties in the Mount Lebanon educational region in order to improve the performance of pupils in need among the less affluent groups

156. On a parallel course, the Educational Centre for Research and Development, using its own means, continued the implementation of some of the themes of the plan:

- Established a Special Education Section within the academic body tasked with creating programmes, approaches and mechanisms that allow the implementation of educational integration factors in public and private schools, in application of the first theme of the plan which aims at institutionalizing integration and developing its implementation;
- Implemented with the GVC organization and the Association for Blind Youth an integration project in five public schools, that provided assistive devices suitable for people with visual disabilities and people with learning difficulties; also, the relevant team provided training for pupils, parents and teachers on how to deal with categories of people with disabilities;
- Selected 18 female trainers in paramedical areas: educational psychology, speech therapy specialists, psychomotor specialists to train members of the teaching staff on how to detect and deal with students with learning difficulties in public schools (approximately 25 thousand teachers trained since early 2006). These courses are repeated annually and are attended by teachers of kindergarten and the first two cycles.

157. Between 2007 and 2012, the Sizobil Foundation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, implemented the school integration project in the Jezzine area, South Lebanon, which provided services that included rehabilitation therapies and specialized education within the framework of partial or total school integration in line with students needs and abilities.

158. The number of integrated public and private schools in Lebanon is between 70 and 75 schools distributed over the entire Lebanese territory. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in cooperation with the Centre for Educational Research and Development, undertook a study to monitor pupils with disabilities and various difficulties in public schools and identify their numbers and types of

disabilities so as to assist officials and decision makers in ensuring that the above requirements are satisfied, the needed resources are secured and the infrastructure is overhauled in order to allow a safe and sound environment. The sample included all public schools (1,282 schools) in all governorates at the kindergarten and primary education levels (275,182 pupils).

159. (See Annex, paragraph (6), Statistical data on the proportion of pupils with disabilities integrated in public schools).

160. (See Annex, Table No. 6: Distribution of students with disabilities in integrated schools in the Governorates by type of disability).

161. Despite the many changes in the negative perception of persons with disabilities, the demand by persons with disabilities that they obtain their rights, the adoption of an approach based on the right to participate in decision making and the significant increase in the number of persons with disabilities who receive education at all its levels, disability remains a theme marred by many challenges as a result of the non-adoption of the decrees implementing Act No. 220/2000, the lack of material resources, the limited specialized human resources, the inadequacy of specialized institutions, the weakness of information programmes and education campaigns aimed at social and educational integration, the absence of an empowering environment and the nonexistence of intervention and early detection centres.

II. Health and health services

162. 50 per cent of the Lebanese people enjoy health coverage through public (93 per cent) and private (7 per cent) insurance funds, and the Ministry of Public Health provides curative health services to those not enjoying any public health coverage through contracts with private hospitals or hospitals that provide services to citizens at special rates that are lower than those adopted in the private sector, in addition to securing basic health care services such as mother and child care and compulsory vaccination.

163. In 2011, the Ministry of Public Health established the National Observatory of Maternal and Neonatal Mortality. Maternal mortality rates witnessed a clear improvement between 2011 and 2014 from 23 deaths per 100,000 live births to 16 deaths per 100,000 live births.

164. The number of health care centres in Lebanon within the National Health Care Network stood at 206 centres as of the end of 2014, about 68 per cent of which being affiliated with the public health sector and about 20 per cent with the municipalities, in addition to the Development Services Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs that make up about 5 per cent, while the centres affiliated with the Ministry of Public Health make up 7 per cent. More than a third of the Lebanese population benefits from the services offered by these centres.

165. The number of beneficiaries in the geographical area covered by each centre is currently not less than 15,000 beneficiaries in rural areas and 30,000 beneficiaries in cities. The monthly number of beneficiaries of all services in the centres is currently not less than 300 beneficiaries in rural areas and 450 beneficiaries in cities.

166. All mandatory vaccinations were included within the national vaccination schedule for all children free of charge from the age of one day to 18 years and are available in all health centres and dispensaries.

167. Since 2012, and as a result of the Syrian displacement crisis and the spread of disease among displaced children, the Ministry of Public Health organized immunization campaigns "from house to house" against polio from birth until the age of five and against measles and rubella from the age of 9 months to 18 years, targeting all children, Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike, regardless of the number and timing of previous doses, in cooperation with relevant ministries and the private sector and with support from the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

168. The Ministry of Public Health has established 4 vaccination points in the Displaced Syrians Registration Centres affiliated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in five Public Security Centers at border crossings, in order to offer measles and polio vaccination in a first stage and refer children to the nearest health centre to complete their routine vaccination.

169. About 1,056,830 children from age 0 to 18 years were vaccinated during 2014 against polio, measles and rubella, about 30 per cent of whom being displaced Syrian children, bearing in mind that vaccination activities are ongoing, including the vaccination of about 353,974 displaced children during 2014 in Displaced Syrians Registration Centres and 98,309 in border crossings. Also, essential drugs and educational materials regarding lice and scabies diseases were distributed.

170. Concerning reproductive health services, 57 per cent of pregnant women in Lebanon benefit from safe motherhood services, including pregnancy monitoring according to clinical work guidelines for reproductive health services, which recommend no less than four follow-up visits, and using the Pregnant Woman Card that had been developed by the Ministry of Public Health/National Programme for Primary Health Care, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, UNICEF and UNHCR, and with the support of the European Union, which benefits all Lebanese and non-Lebanese pregnant women who are followed-up in primary health care centres. The primary health care programme also provides family planning means and other supplies and medicines for reproductive health in general and maternal health in particular. In addition, some centres outside the primary health care network provide health services for displaced persons.

171. Primary health care centres provide essential medicines for chronic and non-chronic diseases to the beneficiaries of their services. The number of beneficiaries of all primary health care services stood at 508,541 displaced Syrians as follows: 321,969 benefited from medicines for chronic and 82,318 from medicines for non-chronic diseases, 133,699 benefited from general medicine, 102,010 benefited from paediatric medicine, 64,432 benefited from immunization services, 38,372 benefited from pregnancy tests, 18,243 benefited from family planning services and 480,340 benefited from oral and dental health services.

172. The Ministry of Public Health has prepared the national plan for the oral and dental health strategy (2005-2010) in collaboration with the Lebanese University and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the two dentists associations in Lebanon and a number of NGOs to implement a prevention and guidance programme for pupils and parents in public and private schools, detect oral and dental problems early on and refer children following diagnosis to health centres for

treatment. 500 doctors were also trained and certified for this campaign under the slogan "a dentist for every school". This campaign is repeated annually, benefiting more than 130,000 pupils annually.

173. On 11/12/2008, Act No. 47 was issued regulating the marketing of infant and newborn feeding products, their methods and tools, and emphasizing the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for a period of six months and the adoption of appropriate complementary feeding habits as of the age of approximately six months, while stressing the need to pursue breastfeeding for at least two years as a way of supporting infant and newborn feeding; moreover, it aimed at ensuring the proper use of infant and children food and supplemental food, when needed, and regulating their marketing and distribution practices.

174. The House of Representatives also passed the Act No. 266/2014 which increased the duration of maternity leave to 10 weeks instead of 8 weeks.

175. Health services are provided free of charge to refugees in UNRWA centres inside the camps. Through continued cooperation with the Government of Lebanon, UNRWA is provided with measles and polio vaccines, so that every refugee child under 12 years obtains the needed vaccines free of charge. The percentage of beneficiaries has increased from 27.3 per cent in 2013 to 72,4 per cent in 2014.

176. Chronic disease treatment is available free of charge at health centres. Every displaced Syrian or Palestinian refugee can renew his prescribed medication for a symbolic sum of 1,000 Lebanese Liras. The total number of Syrian beneficiaries of health care centres services stands at about 35,400 displaced Syrians, of whom 10,549 benefited from paediatric services and 578 from vaccination services.

(a) Adolescent health

177. Act No. 174 on "Prohibiting smoking in closed public places" was issued in 2011. It stipulates that closed places be 100 per cent smoke-free, prohibits marketing, advertising and sponsoring youth activities by smoking agencies, raises tobacco taxes and imposes penalties on violators.

178. The findings of a study on smoking rates among children (11-13 years old in public schools) conducted by the Ministry of Public Health in 2011 in cooperation with national research centres show that the proportion of males who have tried smoking stands at 42 per cent versus 31 per cent for females, and that the proportion of male smokers currently stands at 18 per cent versus 6 per cent for girls. Around 2/3 of the students consider themselves passive smokers at home or in public places, and around 60 per cent of students surveyed had learned about the dangers of smoking, whereas less than 40 per cent of them discussed the reasons that lead young people of their age to smoke.

179. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through its Reproductive Health Unit, seeks to increase awareness of sexual and reproductive health, especially among adolescents. Its functions include training, awareness-raising and education, advocacy, lobbying and undertaking studies. The Unit was also able to develop a training curriculum about sexual/reproductive health, that currently benefits 7 care institutions through the training of some 250 educational supervisors, psychological specialists, teachers and educators working with more than 5000 children and adolescents. Moreover, the Reproductive Health Unit, in cooperation with the Department of Primary Health

Care of the Ministry of Public Health, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the health centre of Saint Joseph University contributed towards the establishment of 11 "youth-friendly service centres" within the Development Services Centres, the centres of the primary health care network and NGOs in different regions. These services benefit children and adolescents aged 10 to 18 years.

(b) HIV (AIDS)

180. The Ministry of Public Health developed a draft law on protecting the rights of the most vulnerable groups, including young people and people living with HIV, and referred it to the relevant parliamentary committees. Material has also been introduced into public schools curricula to raise awareness about HIV.

181. According to the Ministry of Public Health statistics about the number of people living with HIV, the number of infected people reached 109 in November 2014, bearing in mind that the cumulative number of such cases was 1780 up to November of the same year.

III. Social security

182. On 4/4/2013, the government amended Decree No. 3950 to award a family compensation to married female employees working in the public sector so as to make their treatment equal to that of male employees.

IV. Standard of living

183. The Lebanese Government adopted a policy of poverty reduction through its endorsement of the "National programme to support the poorest families", which is based on determining the level of poverty of families by evaluating their social and economic status using 62 indices/information given by the family representative. During the application phase (2011-2013), 36,575 families (comprising 171,903 members) were classified as falling below the lowest poverty line and thus entitled to benefit from the programme services.

184. In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs began the implementation of this programme and worked on issuing cards to the poorest families to help them get some health, social and educational services free of charge or in kind services such as full health coverage in government and private hospitals (30 government hospitals and 46 private hospitals), covering the cost of medicines for chronic diseases, free registration of pupils in public schools (Minister of Education and Higher Education circular 6/2012 date 5/10/2012 to officials in public technical institutes and schools) and provide them with textbooks free of charge, and provide a food basket if the head of household is over 60 years of age, does not have a job and his family consists of less than 3 persons (Council of Ministers resolution 23/11/2011). This programme will be adopted with the selection of 150,000 beneficiaries to be covered by six health packages through the universal health coverage programme implemented by the Ministry of Public Health and the World Bank.

185. Targeting mechanisms and indicators adopted by the programme to classify families take into consideration the best interests of the child, bearing in mind that the presence of children within families increases the possibility of these families being classified among the poorest; they also ensure non-discrimination on grounds of sex and disability. The effects of implementing the project include reducing school dropout rates as a result of the educational assistance provided and improving child health through the provision of food and health care.

186. (See Annex, Table 7: Number of children benefiting from the programme to support the poorest families).

Chapter VIII

Education, leisure and cultural activities

I. Education

187. In 2011, Act No. 150 was issued making education compulsory and free for the basic education cycle (15 years) in public schools; it was followed by operational steps, including:

- Preparing a draft operational decree for the Act to identify mechanisms and responsibilities of all official stakeholders (the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Justice, etc.);
- Exempting parents from paying registration fees from the first grade until the ninth grade in public schools;
- Distributing textbooks free of charge for pupils in kindergarten and primary education in public schools pursuant to Act No. 112/2011, using the budget of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Decree 11212/2014 (financial donation from the British international development agency BFID for the period 2013-2014).

188. In 2014, Decree 11930 was issued setting the kindergarten period for children to three school years instead of two, and the age of admission of the child in public schools to three years instead of four; the Educational Centre for Research and Development had prepared in 2008 a progressive approach for this education cycle based on a three dimensional method. The Centre implemented 250 training courses for teachers in the formal sector on the new approach to curricula (competency approach) and how to implement the content of textbooks. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education built new schools equipped with kindergartens in the most needy areas, and restored, rehabilitated and equipped approximately 120 public kindergartens out of 800 public kindergartens.

189. The Higher Council for Childhood works towards the implementation of the Early Childhood Development project in Lebanon within the framework of a cooperation agreement with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND) (2014-2015), which includes the development of a national strategy for early childhood development through a participatory mechanism with the public and

private sectors in 2015, based on a survey of the status of early childhood and a study based on the Systems Approach for Better Education Results "SABER" in cooperation with the World Bank. It also includes training of governesses and female social workers on developing early childhood and parental education skills, and preparing training manuals in collaboration with the Arabic Resources Workshop, as well as organizing awareness-raising and information campaigns to promote early childhood development.

190. A study by the Educational Centre for Research and Development on "The evolution of educational indicators from 2002 to 2010", shows that the school dropout rate in both first and second basic education cycles amounted to 4.7 per cent in the academic year 2007-2008; this rate increased in the third cycle of the same year due to the high cost of education generally in the public and private sectors for people with limited income and the large number of students that enrol in vocational and technical education sector or access the labour market. To this end, and in order to reduce school dropout rates, a decision by the Minister of Education and Higher Education was issued in 2010 abolishing the automatic promotion system in the first cycle in view of the high dropout rate in the fourth basic grade.

191. In February 2013, with support from AGFUND, an agreement of understanding was signed between the Regional Office of UNESCO, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Educational Centre for Research and Development with a view to implementing the project "Bringing back to schools children who drop out of the second cycle of basic education (9 to 11 years)", in order to link public and private education through the institutionalization of private education and developing for private education an educational programme parallel to public education. The Educational Centre for Research and Development developed a special intensive accelerated curriculum, and books were prepared in the three languages. Teachers will be trained on this curriculum, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education will give children attending this informal programme equivalent certificates so that they may return to their schools. The implementation of this project will continue in the third cycle provided sufficient funding is available.

192. With a view to developing education and improving the learning environment, Act No. 73/2009 was issued providing a mechanism mandating directors to attend a compulsory preparatory course at the Faculty of Education. In this context, a first group was trained (400 directors, funded by the United States Development Agency USAID); previously, 700 directors were trained on leadership skills development.

193. The Educational Development Project of the Ministry of Education aims at developing the management of the educational sector and following up plans financed by loans and grants from the World Bank, as well as supervising the implementation of the "My studies" project which is based on training teachers and managers about all educational materials and especially the English language, the restoration of public schools, especially kindergartens, and equipping them with tools and games with funds from USAID.

194. In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched a five-year educational plan to develop the general and vocational and technical education sectors (pre-university) under the title "Quality education for development", which

is based on providing quality education for all on the basis of equal opportunity; it has, however, not been implemented.

195. The proportion of Syrian pupils who registered in Lebanese schools during the year 2013-2014 stands at only 25 per cent, with 75 per cent remaining outside the educational system. The increasing influx of displaced children is an additional burden on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and specifically on public education, which affects the quality of education, increases the school dropout rates and raises the rates of violence, child labour and early marriage of girls.

196. Government expenditure on education accounts for 7 per cent of the overall budget, the bulk of which is allotted to salaries, and the remaining share is not sufficient for the implementation of projects and educational programmes. And yet teachers' wages are not sufficient to secure a decent standard of living. The Council of Ministers was unable to adopt a new salary scale for teachers. The financial burden on the educational sector is exacerbated by the fact that more than a third of Lebanon's public school buildings are not owned by the State, and the Ministry of Education and Higher education rents more than 400 schools.

197. The rules of procedure of public and private schools, and in particular resolution 1130/M/2001 (The rules of procedure of public schools), prohibit any corporal punishment of students by education staff. Decisions have been issued by the Minister of Education and Higher Education on taking action (according to the law) against teachers offenders who practice violence on their students. To this end, the Ministry has provided a hotline to follow up complaints by parents about violence committed against their children. Complaints are referred from the Office of the General Directorate to the Educational Region of the relevant school and then to the competent educational guidance unit to follow-up these cases. An unpublished study prepared by the Higher Council for Childhood in collaboration with the World Vision and Save the Children organizations in 2009 shows that only 24 per cent of children do not mention that they were subjected to physical violence at school during the previous year, 19 per cent of children denied having experienced any manifestation of verbal violence at school while 20 per cent of children experienced a significant level of verbal violence.

198. The Higher Council for Childhood during the period 2007-2008, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with support from the World Vision and Save the Children organizations, implemented a programme to train trainers on positive alternatives to punishment in schools that targeted 35 educational advisers from the Directorate of Educational Guidance and 25 trainers from the Educational Centre for Research and Development with a view to training them on adopting positive education skills that can be transferred to teachers in public schools according to the comprehensive approach to the rights of the child. Publications have also been produced as well as a television spot. At the end of this project, a course on the protection of children from violence was added to the courses of the continuous training for teachers; it is, however, an optional course, and the difficulties that prevent the transfer of this experience and knowledge to teachers in all public schools include the lack of financial resources and weak follow-up.

199. Statistics from the multiple indicator cluster survey carried out by the Central Statistics Department and UNICEF for 2009 show the following:

- The average ratio of children aged 36 to 59 months enrolled in one of the preschool education projects or programmes is 61.7 per cent (63.2 per cent for girls and 60.4 per cent for boys);
- 88.5 per cent of children who are old enough to attend primary school (6 years) are enrolled during the current year in the first elementary grade. The ratios are roughly equal for boys and girls;
- The ratio of children of primary school age (6-11 years) attending elementary school or middle school is very high, and stands at 98.3 per cent (98.4 per cent for girls and 98.3 per cent for boys); it declines, however, to 97.5 per cent in the districts of Akkar and Miniyeh-Danniyeh and 96.2 per cent in the remaining districts of North Lebanon;
- The ratio of children of middle and high school age (17-12 years) attending these or higher level schools stands at 81.1 per cent; it varies between sexes, with 85.2 per cent for girls compared to 77.4 per cent for boys. These enrolment ratios also vary among regions on the one hand, and between sexes in every region on the other hand;
- The net rate of completion of the primary cycle is 72.4 per cent (74.7 per cent for girls compared to 70.6 per cent for boys);
- The rate of promotion to the intermediate and secondary education cycles is 96.7 per cent.

II. Goals of education

200. The Educational Centre for Research and Development has undertaken to develop the curriculum of the first cycle of primary education — in a pilot phase — in a manner suitable to the pupil's confidence and abilities, and thus develop his personality on the basis of assuming responsibility and carrying out duties; it has also developed a curriculum for the second and third cycles at public schools about "Children's safety online" with the aim of creating a safer environment for children on the Internet in Lebanon (1,500 public school teachers were trained on child online safety, and the training is also followed-up in private schools), which enhances the quality of education.

201. The educational advancement plan devised by the Educational Centre for Research and Development in 1997 approved informatics as an educational subject and tool in public, private, middle and high schools; however, many of these schools still lack the laboratories and instructors needed to teach the curriculum for this subject. The modern curricula of public education also include a commitment by schools to include the subjects of art, a second foreign language and technology in the public education sector; this is, however, not implemented in all public and private schools because of insufficient financial and human resources.

202. The Educational Centre for Research and Development created a permanent organ for continuous training, in cooperation with the Educational Inspectorate and the World Bank and with funds provided by the French Government, whose task

consists in developing annual plans for the training of teaching staff at all levels, subdivisions and areas of education on a permanent basis in all academic subjects and modern technology, with a view to developing their competence and raising their productivity to offer a better quality education (training of about 16,000 teachers annually), and training them on citizenship matters, non-discrimination, tolerance, equality, alternatives to violence, human rights, conflict resolution and dialogue, in cooperation with international organizations and civil society institutions. Also, the general education undergraduate curricula and civics textbook promote the concepts of human rights and the rights of the child. The Educational Guidance Unit provide children in some public schools with life skills necessary to this end.

III. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

203. The Ministry of Culture encourages children to write poetry and short stories through the support it provides by printing and distributing their work free of charge. It also ensures that children attend free of charge recreational, educationally purposeful or environmental plays throughout the year in different regions, each performance being attend by no less than 500 children; it also organizes the annual school theatre festival for children. Moreover, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Tourism organize many educational and artistic competitions.

204. The civil sector is actively managing and organizing training courses on therapeutic interactive theatre for people working with children to enable them to acquire special skills in dealing with children through techniques and methods of storytelling, painting and handicrafts… and to transmit specific concepts and messages on participation, equality and rights, accepting different opinions, communicating with each other and resolving conflicts. "The National Commission for Children's Books" is implementing programmes, including the behavioural skills programme for school children and the "Bibliotherapie" programme for displaced Syrian and Iraqi children who are suffering from the impact of armed conflict through reading stories for a 20-week period. It also distributes mobile libraries to civil institutions each containing 1,000 books in several languages.

205. The Ministry of Social Affairs organizes in its centres recreational and artistic programmes and activities, including theatrical performances by children, drawings and handicrafts; it also implements annual volunteer camps in various areas of Lebanon that include activities and summer schools for children.

206. The Arab Foundation for Puppet Theatre implemented an interactive puppet presentation for 39,000 pupils from among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in 68 UNRWA schools.

207. Ministries cooperate with NGOs and international organizations in implementing artistic and developmental recreational programmes and activities for children from all strata of society, and creating parks and providing them with games, equipping youth cultural centres and creating safe spaces for children. They also implement programmes aimed at encouraging young people to manage and undertake voluntary activities with a view to integrate them more into their communities and encourage them to build partnerships with various sectors of society.

208. UNICEF and other international organizations support the creation of friendly spaces for refugee children and adolescents in Lebanon. They also manage a set of mobile education and entertainment activities that travels to the place of residence of children and interact with them.

209. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is concerned with the affairs of sports, scout and youth and all associated bodies and activities, and with the physical and sporty well-being of youth. It supervises all scout, youth and sports associations according to a specific mechanism defined by Decree 8990 of 29/9/2012 (regulating the sports, youth and scout movement). The Ministry accredits sports clubs in educational establishments and sports associations concerned with children's sports, especially those that create football academies for children from 5 years of age. The Ministry is also concerned with the accreditation of children's summer camps associations which are required to provide safe and protected surroundings for all participants in their activities through the conclusion of annual insurance contracts against accidents, and insuring that they do not use stimulants or smoke before and during the activities.

210. The practice of sport is in general not available to children free of charge, and there are no texts or legislation that require the concerned bodies to provide children with the opportunity to practice sport free of charge. Private non-free sports playgrounds and clubs are common, excluding playgrounds and clubs that are supported by municipalities in villages and towns. The private sector organizes a set of national sports competitions (marathons) on several occasions in order to highlight issues specific to childhood and secure financial support for associations involved with children.

211. Municipalities and the Ministry of Social Affairs work towards disseminating children-friendly green spaces by rehabilitating existing parks and creating new ones suitable for people with disabilities and equipping them with various games. Private educational and scientific recreational centres for children are common, but most of them are not free and thus target a certain category only of children.

212. The Tourism Police inspect touristic enterprises to ensure that alcoholic beverages and tobacco are not offered to children under the age of 18 years, and establish seizure reports against offenders; penalties could reach the full closure of the enterprise.

Chapter IX

Special protection measures

I. Refugee children

213. The prominent event concerning the theme of refugee children during the reporting period is reflected in the unprecedented repercussions of the Syrian displacement crisis on Lebanon, which exceed the capacity of the State to deal with them. The Government has made great efforts to manage the crisis as much as possible in cooperation with United Nations organizations and concerned international associations.

214. The total number of refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2005 was 2,547 refugees mostly from Iraq and Sudan, 20 per cent of whom were children.

215. By 2010, the UNHCR was primarily focused on meeting the needs of approximately 10,000 mostly Iraqi refugees; however, after the Syrian crisis erupted in 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians moved across the border into Lebanon and, by 31 December 2014, UNHCR had registered 1,146,405 displaced persons representing 272,784 families, 54 per cent of whom were children and 26 per cent girls.[1]

216. A Ministerial Committee was formed to follow up the matter of the displaced[2] persons headed by the Prime Minister and comprising in its membership the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Social Affairs, Public Health, Education and Higher Education, National Defense, Interior and Municipalities and the Higher Relief Commission; a mechanism was identified for coordinating the relief efforts that includes work on key sectors, namely: health, education, shelter, food and social affairs.

217. In July 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Higher Relief Commission and UNHCR, was tasked with the coordination of relief work needed to address the needs of the Syrian citizens compelled to come to Lebanon. 45 development services centres were approved in all of Lebanon as basic response centres in emergency situations and equipped medically and socially accordingly; the ministry working group was also strengthened with new expertise to improve the quality of the interventions.

218. The General Directorate of Public Lebanese Security regulates the presence and residence of Syrians and Palestinians displaced from Syria into Lebanon. On 31 December 2014, the General Directorate of Public Security issued a set of regulations to administer the flow of Syrians entering Lebanon, whereby criteria were defined for accepting requests from Syrians to enter Lebanon.

219. UNHCR cooperates with the Lebanese Public Security concerning the renewal of residence permits of Syrians, so that it is now possible to accept the asylum card as sufficient grounds to renew their residence permit. It also works with the General Directorate of Personal Status to increase the number of support staff in regional centres with a view to reducing the pressure on government resources resulting from the additional demand for birth registration.

220. The General Directorate of Public Security entrusts minors and their parents (especially mothers) to specific bodies (Caritas, an embassy, a NGO) until the processing of their files is completed; if the processing takes a long time, fathers are also placed with their families to ensure that children are not separated from their parents.

221. In cases of family reunification, the General Directorate of Public Security allows children present outside the Lebanese borders to join their family, either by a

[1] According to UNHCR statistics.

[2] The characterization "refugee" does not apply to displaced Syrians who came to Lebanon as the Lebanese State does not grant them such characterization and considers their presence temporary and for purely humanitarian grounds, given that Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

decision of the Director General, in case the request is submitted directly at the border, or at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs, in case entry is allowed on humanitarian grounds. It should also be noted that minors are not arrested or detained in public security jails; in case the detention of parents is necessary, the child is entrusted to a social welfare institution.

(a) Palestinian refugee children

222. It is estimated that the number of Palestinians without identity papers in Lebanon stands at about 4,000 people. The Embassy of Palestine issues a certificate of nationality upon submission by the applicant of proof that he is of Palestinian origin and that he entered Lebanon after 1967. In 2008, all Lebanese official authorities concerned agreed to provide persons without identity papers with an "identification card" valid for one year and subject to renewal.

223. In 2014, the total number of Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon (0-18 years) registered with UNRWA was 133842, including 16955 displaced children from Syria, representing 12 per cent of Palestine refugee children in Lebanon.

224. There are no obstacles that prevent Palestinians pupils from entering Lebanese public schools; moreover, they are treated equally as Lebanese students in terms of registration requirements, submission of documents and required fees.

225. The Minister of Education and Higher Education issued circular 7/m/2010 of 3/2/2010, which requested all officials of public and private schools of all types and stages and of the Lebanese University and private universities to accept the registration of Palestinian pupils and students upon presentation of an identity card dating back to three years, provided that they meet the other registration requirements.

226. Following the intensive Syrian exodus to Lebanon, the Minister of Education and Higher Education issued circular 25/m/2014 of 18 September 2014 requesting the principals of public schools to limit the acceptance of Palestinian pupils to those who have been living in Lebanon for more than three years, both old and new, and who have no UNRWA schools in the geographical area of their residence, in the basic education cycle.

227. The number of Palestinian pupils registered in the education sector increased from 12,832 pupils in 2010 to 13,460 pupils in 2013. The number of UNRWA schools stands at 67, of which 8 function under the two-shift system to accommodate children. The total number of pupils in these schools stood at 30,262 pupils in 2013.

228. In 2014, Decree 11737 was issued accrediting a private technical institute run by UNRWA and recognizing the certificate it issues in all disciplines covered in the Lebanese State curriculum for vocational and technical education.

229. Palestinian refugees benefit from the services of public and private hospitals and other health services provided by the Ministry of Public Health (immunization programmes, basic medicines, training programmes, etc.) through contracts concluded by UNRWA with hospitals to provide health and therapeutic services; UNRWA has contracted with 13 government hospital, which allowed it to benefit from the services of these hospitals for a standard fee that applies to all these

hospitals. The Lebanese Government covers the medical expenses associated with tuberculosis and measles vaccines to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Exceptional approval can also be obtained from the Minister of Public Health to cover some services for Palestinians and foreign workers in the case no other coverage mechanism exists.

230. As a result of the agreement between the Ministry of Public Health and UNRWA, a Palestinian refugee can now buy medicines for cancer through UNRWA clinics at the same reduced price accorded to government hospitals.

231. UNRWA offers comprehensive primary health care services to Palestine refugees through 28 health centres inside the camps and conglomerations outside the camps. The UNRWA health programme has been developed to include full hospital services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; since 2013, UNRWA works to integrate mental health services and psycho-social support into its primary health care centres by improving the ability to identify, refer and deliver services. Since 2014, medical services are provided for victims of rape and sexual abuse as part of the hospital programme.

(b) Syrian displaced children

232. As a result of the crisis in Syria and the increasing numbers of persons displaced to Lebanon, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education faced several problems, including the issue of securing a place for Syrian children in public schools, as well as the issue of adaptation to the Lebanese educational curriculum and specifically foreign languages. Consequently, the Minister of Education and Higher Education issued a circular under number 25/2014 with the aim of organizing the registration process of Lebanese and Syrian students in public schools. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education prepared a three-year strategy with a view to ensuring education for all children in Lebanon ("RACE"), including displaced children, so that the most vulnerable children who are of school age (3-18 years) and those affected by the Syrian crisis may access formal and informal education in safe and secure environments. This strategy, however, requires further technical and financial support by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and other donors.

233. Despite the increase in the number of displaced Syrian children who attend school, 190,000 of 295,000 children aged 6-14 years (the age of compulsory education in Lebanon) do not access officially accredited education. There are still large gaps in the 15-18 years age group, given that 3,000 displaced children attend school while 90,000 children of this age group are school dropouts.

234. Children and parents from among the displaced Syrians have access to the development services centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs that are present in all Lebanese regions and considered as children-friendly spaces. These centres organize awareness sessions and implement various activities (sports, psycho-social support, learning courses, etc.) in collaboration with local and international NGOs.

235. Some emergency hospitalization cases of displaced Syrians are dealt with in public hospitals; foreign and local relief associations provide the financial coverage for hospitalization, tests and essential medicines. Among those who benefited from referral to hospitals, 70 per cent were female, 24 per cent were children under 5 years of age and 14 per cent were infants under one year of age.

236. In 2014, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees implemented a pilot project targeting street children in Beirut and provided some psychological interventions and material assistance to about 307 street children and working children from among the displaced persons. 100 persons involved with child protection were also trained and sensitized to the particular vulnerabilities of street children. In the same year, UNHCR launched a case management program, with the aim of providing training for personnel working on the front lines about safe diagnosis and referral and how to plan the management of child protection cases. The Best Interest Determination (BID) tool was adopted and circulated to partners with a view to providing additional procedural safeguards and measures to protect vulnerable children, particularly unaccompanied children and those separated from their parents.

(c) Children of migrant workers

237. Under the provisions regulating residence in Lebanon, certain categories of low-paid expatriates, particularly female domestic workers, are not allowed to bring into Lebanon their spouses and children; it was possible in the past for the children of female expatriate workers born in Lebanon to apply for residence for one year until the age of four, and then request a residence permit if they attended school. However, as of the beginning of 2014, a measure was taken affecting workers of the third and fourth categories, namely domestic workers and low income workers in the agricultural and industry sectors, whereby the residence of children of migrant workers is not renewed, and, therefore, migrant workers may be deported with their children even though they are working legally. Public security sources report that this procedure applies to persons in breach of the system of residence and that a decision is taken on a case-by-case basis; also, migrant workers are not deported on the grounds that they begot children in Lebanon.

II. Children belonging to minorities

238. In 2010, a study[3] was carried out to assess the needs of the Dom children[4] residing in Lebanon. The number of Doms is estimated to be about 3,112 persons living in agglomerations close to marginalized and poor areas, 72 per cent of them carry the Lebanese nationality as a result of the naturalization decree of 1994, and 87 per cent of them now live in urban settings.

239. The naturalization decree improved access to public services such as education and health services. However, 68 per cent of Dom children have never attended school.

240. Children in these groups face a set of risks as a result of several factors including: extreme poverty, the absence of legal bases to obtain a residence permit, low educational attainment, lack of identity documents, high rates of physical violence and neglect, early marriage and motherhood and the commercial and sexual exploitation of girls.

[3] Terre des Hommes, *A Child Protection Assessment: The Dom People and their Children in Lebanon, December 2010*.

[4] Dom: The term "Dom" is not used in everyday language; the Doms are known as the "Nawars", an ethnic minority present in a number of middle-eastern countries.

III. Street children

241. Act No. 422 classifies street children as being at risk, in which case the judge takes protective, supervised freedom or reform measures in their favour as appropriate.

242. In 2010, the Higher Council for Childhood prepared a draft national strategy on "Prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of street children". As a result of the demographic changes that the street children phenomenon has witnessed, it is currently being updated.

243. In 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs implemented a massive campaign to remove street children from all areas in coordination with the ministries of Justice and Interior and Municipalities and in cooperation with concerned NGOs. Pursuant to a decision by the public prosecutor, the Internal Security forces removed children from the streets in the presence of female social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs and handed them over to the concerned associations. However, this campaign did not continue due to the lack of required services that were to be provided by NGOs. To complement this campaign, two training courses were implemented for about 50 female social workers at the Ministry of Social Affairs to build their capacity for social intervention with street children.

244. Within the framework of the cooperation programme with the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, the following was carried out:

- In 2007, training courses: for media professionals on "Media professionals approach to the subject of street children", to enhance their knowledge of the problem of street children, and develop the communicative and informational capacity of media professionals; as well as for social workers in the Development Services Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs and in NGOs about "Primary intervention with street children";
- In 2008, the study entitled "Street children in Lebanon: their characteristics, perceptions and perceptions of people working with them", to explore the extent to which children and the people concerned in the public and private sectors know about street life and its consequences with respect to meeting the needs of these children, that targeted 34 street children and 41 public and private activities. The results revealed problems in personal, social and collective identity; children refuse to belong to the category of street children (nomads) and consider themselves social persons. They suffer from a discriminatory policy that denies them the possibility of integration in schools due to the lack of school classes that are appropriate to their age and scientific level;
- Several television spots, a documentary film, publications and an information package with the aim of spreading awareness of the rights of street children, creating a community understanding of their cause and advocating to protect their rights.

245. In the context of its policy aimed at providing social, health and educational care for street children, the Ministry of Social Affairs contracts with NGOs concerned with the rehabilitation and vocational training of street children and their acquiring the skills needed for their reintegration into society.

IV. Children in situations of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

(a) Child labour

246. Concerned ministries, particularly the Ministry of Labour and its partners, endeavour to provide an environment protective of working children, secured by laws, services and good practices, with a view to combating the problem of child labour.

247. Decree No. 8987 of 29/12/2012 was issued prohibiting the employment of juveniles under 18 years of age, especially to carry out work that is dangerous to their health, safety or moral conduct; a guidance manual was also prepared to explain and interpret this Decree addressed to employers, working children, parents, students, teachers and all segments of society.

248. In 2011, the Labour Minister transmitted a proposed bill to amend the Lebanese labour law to the Council of Ministers, that provided many amendments aimed at ensuring the protection of juvenile rights, health and safety at work in accordance with international and Arab labour standards, particularly in relation to the minimum age at which juveniles may be employed, the maximum permissible hours they may work, determining their special working conditions and the industries and professions in which employing juveniles is prohibited. The worst forms of child labour were also prohibited and were considered as criminal offences, and mitigating circumstances or suspended sentences were not permitted in respect of violations of the provisions of the chapter on juvenile employment or labour.

249. The measures taken by the Ministry of Labour to address the problem of economic exploitation of children include the following:

- Establishing the National Committee to Combat Child Labour by Decree number 5137 of 1/10/2010;
- Launching the hotline (1740) in 2010 to receive complaints 24/7, so that they may be followed up and transmitted to the competent departments of the Ministry and subsequently to the concerned bodies;
- Developing a national strategy to raise awareness about the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon in cooperation with ILO in 2012;
- Launching the national plan of action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon in 2016, under the sponsorship of the Lebanese President in the Presidential Palace on 7/11/2013.

250. With a view to promoting the right of children to participate, the Ministry of Labour established, in March 2013, a special platform for working children to allow them to express their opinions and submit complaints in order to help them improve their living conditions; this is a regular activity that working children carry out annually.

251. During the two-year period 2013-2014, the Ministry of Labour implemented informational training courses for journalists on the theme of working children, and

training courses for a number of NGOs on inspection, referral and direct intervention by the Ministry of Labour.

252. During the two-year period 2010-2011, the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs implemented a project to combat child labour with the support of the Holland — War Child association, whereby administrative and technical labour inspectors were trained on how to combat child labour; a number of female social workers were also trained in the development services centres by the Higher Council for Childhood on combating child labour and practical measures to remove children from the streets and refer them to the competent centres for assistance.

253. The Central Statistics Department, in collaboration with the National Committee to Combat Child Labour and with support from the National Labour Organization, is preparing a comprehensive national survey on working children in Lebanon; work on this study will be completed by late 2015.

254. In 2014, a study was carried out on "Children living and working on the streets in Lebanon: characteristics and size"[5] within the technical project entitled "Supporting the national action aimed at combating the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon", in light of the influx of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons from Syria to Lebanon. The aim of this study was to develop and implement a special program to combat this phenomenon in order to remove as many children as possible from the streets. The study involved more than 700 cases of Lebanese and non-Lebanese children, and was carried out in different locations and areas in Lebanon where a relatively high number of children live or work on the streets. The total number of children living and working on the streets was estimated at about 1,510 children in the 18 Lebanese areas covered by the study sample, which showed the following:

- Of the total number of street children, the proportion of children coming from Syria is 73 per cent, the Lebanese nationals 10 per cent, the Palestinian children 8 per cent and the rest are stateless or belong to ethnic or racial minorities residing in Lebanon, including Nawars, Turkmen and Arab nomads;
- 51 per cent of street children live in and around the capital and in adjacent areas, the results show also that 27 per cent of children live in slums and poor neighbourhoods;
- The proportion of children who do not know how to read or write at all stands at 42 per cent, 57 per cent of children had dropped out of school and only 3 per cent are enrolled in school and work on the streets at the same time;
- The first access to the labour market for most children occurs between 7 and 14 years of age. The highest rates were recorded for children between 12 and 14 years of age (39 per cent), followed by children between 7 and 11 years of age (36 per cent);

[5] Carried out by the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, with funds provided by the German Government, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, UNICEF and Save the Children organization, 2014.

- The daily number of working hours ranges between 4 and 16 hours with an average of about 8.46 hours a day;
- Children are exposed to risks during their work on the streets: lifting heavy loads (39 per cent) and different forms of road and traffic accidents (30 per cent). Approximately 29 per cent of children on the streets reported that they were hounded or detained by security and police officers, and approximately 6 per cent of children were victims of sexual abuse or rape in their workplace. Also, nearly half the children on the streets stated that they have no one to whom they could complaint or from whom they could ask for protection, while approximately one third resort to a family member (35 per cent of these cases).

255. The results of this new study will allow relevant ministries, especially the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, and international organizations to work more effectively to keep children off the streets and provide them with a better future.

(b) Unlawful use of children in the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

256. The drug problem is exacerbated globally and locally in terms of the increasing number of addicts, the lower average age of initiation to abuse, as well as the progression towards new types of hard drugs and therefore towards a serious addiction problem, which requires immediate attention.

257. On 26/11/2011, the National Council to Combat Drugs was created under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and membership of the concerned ministries. Pursuant to Article 199 of the Act on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, the Drug Addiction Control Committee was established and accorded full powers under the law to take the necessary measures to ensure automatic and compulsory care and treatment, including referring the addict to specialized clinics and issuing a nominal certificate proving that he is totally cured from the disease of addiction. A mechanism was developed to identify the procedures to be adopted for dealing with persons who are detained for drug abuse offences whereby they are referred for treatment instead of being sent to prison; in practice, however, this Committee refers to treatment only persons detained for the first time for drug offences whereas recidivists are not referred.

258. For further information, please refer to the third report, paragraph 607.

259. In 2010, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched the "National Programme for the Prevention of Addiction" with a view to developing a comprehensive national plan for the prevention of drug addiction in cooperation with community institutions.

260. The findings of the World Health Survey of school children 13-15 years of age conducted in Lebanon in 2011 show that 4.7 per cent had once abused one or more drugs, 50 per cent tried drugs before 10 years of age, 3.3 per cent used hashish, 3.1 per cent used stimulants, 2.4 per cent used drugs at least once during the month preceding the survey whereas 3 per cent said they will use drugs in the next 12 months.

261. (See Annex, Table 8: Number of children under 18 years of age arrested for drug offences by type of offence and nationality).

262. The Ministry of Public Health contracts with two treatment and rehabilitation centres for addicts. Consequently, a very small percentage of drug users receive the necessary treatments because of the significant shortfall in the number of beds and the high cost of hospitalization. The number of addicts who received treatment at the expense of the Ministry of Public Health in 2011 was about 1,300. The Ministry of Public Health also started adopting the principle of substitution therapy; the number of recipients of this therapy was 1,378, including 3 children under the age of 18.

263. The Ministry of Social Affairs contracts with a number of specialized associations (about 7 associations) involved with rehabilitation and providing integrated services that include social, psychological, health and judiciary follow-up. However, the accommodation capacity of these institutions is limited due to their limited human and material capabilities, as well as the fact that they receive all categories of adult and minor addicts of both sexes. There are no specialized institutions to follow-up minors only, and by being with adults, minors risk adopting and learning dangerous behaviours. The number of cases received by the "Om Ennour" association, which was contracted by the ministries of Public Health and Social Affairs as a reception centre for 2014, show that the demand magnitude exceeds the accommodation capacity by 3 or 4 times and that 57 per cent of those who seek assistance started using drugs as they were between 14 and 19 years of age.

264. Government departments and NGOs are actively organizing awareness and education campaigns, in cooperation with international organizations and the private sector, targeting all segments of society, and in particular children and young people in schools and universities. Some NGOs also train youth groups in order to contribute to the awareness-raising process and therefore reach the most vulnerable groups in marginal environments, perform the required tests and encourage them to seek treatment.

(c) Sale, trafficking and abduction

265. On 24/8/ 2005, Act No. 680 was promulgated authorizing the Lebanese Government to join the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, Act No. 681 on Lebanon's accession to the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and Act No. 682 on joining the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially women and Children. To implement this commitment, on 1/9/2011 Act No. 164 was promulgated on "Punishing the Crime of Trafficking in Persons", which added new provisions to the Lebanese Penal Code and amended the Criminal Proceedings Code with a view to protecting witnesses. This Act has to a great extent taken into consideration the relevant international conventions. On 10/10/2012, the implementing decree number 9082 for this Act was promulgated stipulating the conditions for the Justice Department to contract with specialized associations to help victims of trafficking of women and children. Subsequently, a memorandum of understanding was signed with Caritas to secure accommodation, care and provide medical and psychological services for victims.

266. On 12/1/2005, the General Directorate of Public Security signed a memorandum of understanding with Caritas — Foreigner Center to provide shelter for victims of trafficking in a "Safe House" and provide them with the necessary support and assistance.

267. In 2008, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, prepared a study on "Preventing and combating trafficking in persons: studying the actual situation in Lebanon".

268. Since 2009, the Higher Council for Childhood, in cooperation with World Vision, organized a set of specialized meetings and workshops targeting specialists, people working with children and members of the internal security forces to introduce the concept of trafficking. A study was carried out in 2011 on the patterns of children trafficking in Lebanon and prevention and protection mechanisms; educational publications were also issued for parents, workers and children about forms of, and ways to prevent, trafficking.

269. In 2013, the powers to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons and prosecute perpetrators were conferred on the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Protect Morals in the judicial police.

270. Many joint initiatives between the government and private sectors were implemented with the support of international organizations, including the drafting of "Standard operating procedures for identifying and referring trafficking victims", and the preparation of the "National action plan to combat trafficking" in 2012 by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, which was submitted to the Prime Minister and awaits a decision. The Human Rights Institute also organized in the Beirut Bar Association several conferences and workshops that issued a "General strategy to combat the crime of trafficking in persons" in 2011, and a "Practical guide for combating trafficking in persons in Lebanon" and "The crime of trafficking in persons in Lebanon: practical indicators" in 2014.

271. In 2014, the Higher Council for Childhood launched a mechanism for drafting a sectoral plan concerning child trafficking in Lebanon through consultative meetings with professionals in line with the spirit of the national strategy to protect and shield children from violence.

V. Children in conflict with the law

272. Act No. 422/2002 on the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law and at risk ensures the best interest of the child through the emphasis on fair and humane treatment of the juvenile in conflict with the law, the adoption of amicable settlements and solutions, taking measures most suitable to the juvenile, avoiding judicial proceedings if possible and resorting to the sentences depriving of liberty only as a last resort. It provides all procedural guarantees during the trial of juveniles with adults (article 31), and specifies that the juveniles at risk are not subject to the same procedures applied to juveniles in conflict with the law (article 46). It also stipulates the mandatory presence of a counsel with the juvenile in all trials, requires a social representative to attend the preliminary investigation within six hours rather than twenty-four hours, ensures the confidentiality of investigations and trials whether concerning the facts or concerning publishing

names and photos, activates the role and responsibility of parents towards the juvenile through prosecutorial decisions (release to the custody of parents against a pledge of surrender to the authorities) and engages the juvenile to take responsibility for his actions by requiring that he does work for the public benefit or that he pays compensation to the victim, and thus widens the therapeutic role of the juvenile court by imposing alternative measures that do not deprive of liberty and strengthens its oversight role with a view to following up the implementation of the measures.

273. A bill to amend Act No. 422/2002 is being discussed in the Lebanese House of Representatives with a view to introducing improvements aimed at raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years, taking into account the interest of the juvenile in all proceedings in case the offence is committed jointly with an adult, assigning specialist consultants to the juvenile judge, allowing appeals against juvenile courts judgments and creating a police specialized in juvenile affairs within the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces.

274. A general memorandum was issued by the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces requiring that the procedures stipulated in Act No. 422 be adhered to, and a Central Investigation Bureau was established inside the Palace of Justice in Beirut which is equipped with the video and audio means needed to listen to the juvenile assault victim so that his statement may be recorded and appended to the investigation record. A service memorandum was also issued in 2013 about the complaint boxes in prison, whereby the help of specialists can be sought to follow-up and address the complaints in coordination with the prison administration. Concerning the provision of legal assistance to juveniles and other related topics, please refer to the third national report, paragraphs 500-536.

275. Article 26 of Act No. 422 stipulates the right of the child victim to complain to the competent authorities, in addition to the automatic judicial intervention in emergency situations.

276. In 2014, the ministries of Justice and Social Affairs cooperated to ensure the presence of a female social worker with the juvenile before the juvenile judges, the preparation of social reports and follow-up in a pilot phase, with a view to institutionalizing the process in a memorandum of understanding to this effect.

277. In order to implement a comprehensive system of alternative measures, the Ministry of Justice contracted with two NGOs to follow up the implementation of public benefit work measures with the support of UNICEF for a period of six years, after which the Ministry of Justice undertook the follow-up since 2012 with one NGO. Coordination with many NGOs, development services centres and municipalities is ongoing with a view to implementing public benefit work measures. In order to improve living conditions in the juvenile wing of the prison, the Ministry of Justice has contracted, since 2011, with two NGOs to provide educational, vocational and rehabilitation programs inside the wing. It has also cooperated with the Ministry of Social Affairs in the literacy and scholastic support program since 2013, as well as with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education — General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, to provide teachers for the vocational training of juveniles at the shops.

278. A study on the assessment of public benefit work measures implemented by UNICEF in Lebanon in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2012, showed that the programme of public benefit work is implemented successfully and is looked at positively by all concerned parties, including juveniles. It was apparent over the years that the proportion of recidivists after performance of public benefit work is the lowest; also, resorting to public benefit work measures increased compared to non-liberty-depriving judgments issued by the juvenile courts. It should be noted that some constraints exist with respect to applying public benefit work measures such as the inadequacy of resources and the lack of awareness and training.

279. Adoption by courts of measures depriving of liberty has decreased, and they represent now about 20 per cent of all decisions while their share was nearly 47 per cent before the promulgation of Act No. 422/2002. Statistics also indicate a decline in the proportion of imprisonment from 17 per cent to nearly 8 per cent, in conjunction with an increase in rehabilitation measures and a restriction of the deprivation of liberty to the arrest period only. This shows that juvenile courts, even when they have no choice but to impose deprivation of liberty as the most effective and appropriate means for the juvenile and the overall circumstances of the offence, tend to prefer rehabilitation over imprisonment.

280. Before Act No. 422/2002 was promulgated, the rate of juvenile detention in their wing of the Roumieh prison was three and a half months; it has gradually decreased to 54 days, that is less than two months, in 2005, and attained 42 days, that is about two and a half months, in 2013. As far as release decisions, they reached 70 per cent.

281. (See Annex, Table 9: Proportion of measures and judgments issued by juvenile courts from 2006 to 2013).

282. In 2006, the Ministry of Justice developed a set of guides targeting investigators, children, parents, social workers and physicians about procedures for dealing with juveniles who are victims or in conflict with the law, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Many training courses have been implemented for social workers, juvenile court judges and lawyers by the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime about Act No. 422 and the basic concepts for dealing with juveniles.

283. As a result of the Syrian crisis and the tragic circumstances faced by some persons that left psychological scars, psychological follow-up of juveniles of Syrian nationality at the Roumieh prison is undertaken by the Caring for Children of War Association ("trauma assessment and psycho-social follow up") through a program funded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Office also supported professional training courses for underage girls in conflict with the law in the initiative centre — Dahr El Bacheq.

VI. Children in armed conflicts

284. During the reporting period, Lebanon suffered the deadliest military attacks by the Israeli army, especially as a result of the aggression of July 2006, which was a violation of international conventions and norms of protection of civilians in general

and children in particular, and a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights.

285. Lebanon's children have suffered for 30 years under the Israeli occupation. True, the recent Israeli aggression was relatively short, but its swiftness was very intense, and violations of the rights of children exceeded those of any previous hostility. The following events were documented as war crimes against children, including:

- The Marwaheen massacre: on 15 July 2006 the Israeli army deliberately targeted a convoy of civilians displaced from their homes, the outcome of this assault was 21 dead, including 14 children;
- The Qana massacre: this was a deliberate attack by the Israeli military on a civilian building where more than 28 civilians were killed, including 16 children, many with disabilities;[6]
- The assault on the Chiyah building: a deliberate air strike by the Israeli air forces that killed 31 civilians, including 18 children;
- On July 23, Israeli warplanes attacked ambulances that were clearly flying Red Cross flags. Although the Israeli forces issued an ultimatum to civilians to leave with their children, they did not give them any guarantee of safe passage and many were attacked while on the roads, including children (the massacre of displaced families from the town of Mansuri).

286. Moreover, Amnesty International has documented many reports about the aerial and maritime embargo imposed by Israel on Lebanon, the bombing of most bridges and main roads, targeting Beirut International Airport and preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster areas.[7]

287. Evidence indicates that Israel used internationally banned and forbidden weapons such as phosphorus, chemical, nail and cluster bombs with the aim of causing the greatest harm to civilians, including children.

288. This war that lasted 33 days resulted in considerable loss of life. According to the estimates of the High Relief Commission, about 1,308 persons were martyred, including 249 children more than 60 of whom were under 5 years of age, and about 4,830 persons were injured, including 908 children; it should be noted that most of the injuries were serious and caused severe deformities and burns.

289. To this should be added the material losses sustained by homes that were totally destroyed, the damages to agricultural property and productivity of the population and the destruction of educational and health institutions and places of worship, which will require more than one billion United States dollars to be restored. The deliberate targeting of infrastructure and roads, water, communications and power networks entailed costs that exceeded 35 million United States dollars, not to mention the damages sustained by vital, tourism and economic sectors, whose repercussions affect Lebanon to this day.

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[6] Human Rights Watch Report: Deadly attack on Lebanon, Israeli attacks against civilians in Lebanon, August 2006 volume 18 number 3 (E), page 32.

[7] Amnesty International AI Index: MDE 18/007/2006, August 23, 2006, p. 20.

290. During the aggression of July 2006, there were frightening estimates of the quantity and spread of unexploded explosives, including land mines, cluster bombs and ammunition, in the populated areas. Within a single month following the end of the aggression, there were 30 child victims of these mines, including wounded and martyrs. According to the estimates of the Ministry of National Defence — Army Command, the total number of children who were victim of unexploded mines and ammunition stands at 88 children (11 martyrs and 77 wounded); locating unexploded mines and ammunition is still ongoing. Also, the Ministry of National Defence — Lebanese Army signs several memoranda of understanding with international and local associations and organizations to finance and implement programmes raising awareness about the risks of unexploded mines, cluster bombs and ammunition.

291. The experience of children during aggression may include direct involvement in watching victims (that is, if they are not victims themselves), forced displacement and migration, insecurity, exposure to extreme violence, physical injury, loss of a family member — if not all of them — which affect the child and his ability to recover. Therefore, international organizations, civil society organizations and government departments are actively administering rehabilitation and psychological reintegration programmes for these children and their families in order to help them overcome the crisis, but all their efforts are insufficient to erase this painful experience from their memory.

292. Lebanon has also suffered during the past ten years from serious security disturbances. In 2007, the hostilities of the Bared river camp for Palestinian refugees erupted between the Lebanese army and Islamic extremist groups, resulting in the almost total destruction of the camp and the displacement of most of its residents to safer neighbouring areas. The year 2008 also witnessed clashes and internal conflicts between Lebanese political parties resulting in casualties among civilians and the destabilization of public peace. And with the deterioration of the crisis in Syria and its implications for the security situation in Lebanon, there were a series of terrorist attacks and bombings that targeted political figures and residential areas, causing considerable material and human losses to civilians, including children, and leaving in its trail massive damages and destruction in the areas that were targeted. Battles also erupted between political forces and parties in the city of Tripoli, and more specifically in the regions of Mount Mohsen and Bab Tebbaneh — one of the poorest and most disadvantaged areas — on a background of support or opposition to the conflict in Syria, resulting in property damage and civilian casualties, including children; the visual media also documented cases of children it claims participated in these conflicts.

293. (See Annex, Table 10: Number of children arrested for an offence related to weapons and terrorism).

294. In the face of the repercussions of the emerging security realities, the Higher Council for Childhood, in partnership with the relevant ministries, international organizations and NGOs (Army Command, Internal Security Forces, Public Security, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNICEF), developed a national plan of action to protect and shield children affected by the armed conflict in Lebanon, that was approved by the Minister of Social Affairs on 19 August 2014. This plan aims at undertaking a legal examination with a view to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the

Child concerning the involvement of children in armed conflicts, as well as establishing mechanisms for coordination, awareness-raising and capacity-building, and proposing rehabilitation and integration programmes.